

THE EMERGENCE OF PALESTINE QUESTION IN ANGLO-TURKISH RELATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MIDDLE EAST (1945-50)*

Türk-İngiliz İlişkilerinde Filistin Meselesi'nin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Ortadoğu'ya Etkisi (1945-50)

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Abstract

The Palestine question, which had taken its root to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, was a long standing political and historical issue between Arabs and Jews over who was to control the Palestine territory. From 1945 onwards, however, it gradually began to turn into a major international issue involving the Arab States, Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, Turkey and others. During this period Palestine Issue became an important mutual factor in Anglo Turkish relations. In this general context, after providing a historical background for the evolution of the Palestine question up to 1945, the topic will be examined in three timespans in terms of its effect on Anglo-Turkish relations.

Keywords: Palestine Question, Britain, Turkey, Israel, United Nations Conciliation Commission (UNCC).

Öz

Kökleri 1917 yılında ilan edilen Balfour Deklarasyonu'na uzanan Filistin Sorunu, Araplar ve Yahudiler arasında bu toprakları kimin kontrol edeceğiyle ilgili tarihi ve siyasi bir meseledir. 1945 yılından sonra ise bu mesele, Arap devletleri, İngiltere, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD), Sovyetler Birliği ve Türkiye gibi ülkeler arasında temel bir uluslararası sorun haline dönüşmüştür. Bilhassa da bu dönemden sonra Filistin Meselesi, Türk-İngiliz ilişkilerini etkileyen önemli bir faktöre dönüşmüştür. Bu genel çerçevede Filistin Meselesi'nin 1945 yılına kadar devam eden tarihi arka planına değinildikten sonra konu, Türk-İngiliz ilişkilerine etkisine bakımından 3 temel dönem altında incelenecektir: ilk dönem (1945-47); ikinci dönem (1947-49); üçüncü dönem (1949-50). Makalede Filistin meselesinin iki ülke ilişkilerine etkisi yanında Ortadoğu'daki tesirleri de ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filistin Meselesi, İngiltere, Türkiye, İsrail, BM Uzlaştırma Komisyonu.

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INTRODUCTION

The article seeks to explore the emergence of Palestine question in Anglo-Turkish relations in the period between 1945 and 1950. The study starts to examine the issue right after the 1945 period because the Palestine question, for the first time, began to take its place on Anglo-Turkish relations from this time onwards. It stops in 1950 at a time when both Turkey and Britain had changed their pro-Arab stance in the Palestine question to a neutral position, and as a result Anglo-Turco-Arab relations began to decline in the Middle East. The topic, as the end of the Second World War sounded the beginning of a new era in the world balance of power, can not be examined out of the Cold War context. In this context, therefore, Anglo-American relations are examined as far as they relate with the topic.

The study, in contrast to the views of conventional wisdom, argues that Turkey, in general, adopted an approach similar to Britain in her policy towards Palestine. This was because the both countries shared parallel strategic and security considerations in their respective policies towards the Middle East, in general, and the Palestine in particular. Both countries maintained that the Soviet Union sought an expansionist policy towards the Middle East and the worsening political situation in Palestine constituted a fertile ground for the spread of the Soviet influence in the region. Moreover, Turkey, in this period, was in desperate need of British and American help against the Soviet danger which threatened Turkey's territorial integrity, and in return to British support, Ankara rendered her assistance to London in the Palestine question. Though Turkey sought both British and American support against the Soviet threat she relied mainly on Britain as it was the only country with a formal commitment to Turkey in case of a foreign aggression.¹

¹ Although the United States declared its economic and political support for Turkey with the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in early 1947 the Doctrine, itself, did not render any binding commitment for Turkey against a foreign threat. The Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of 1939 hence remained the only formal commitment for Turkey's security and for this reason Turkey continued to rely mainly on Britain for its safety until mid-1951. For more information see, Mustafa Bilgin, *Britain and Turkey in the Middle East: Politics and Influence in the Early Cold War Era*, IB Tauris, London&New York 2007, p. 36-41.

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The study further argues that Turkey, especially from 1948 onwards, not only did begin to play a crucial role in Britain's Palestine policy but also was to be regarded as a key mediator on the issue of finding a solution for the problems between Arabs and Jews by both Western and Arab quarters. Moreover, this article brings evidence that there was a parallel correlation between Turkey's collaboration with Britain in Middle Eastern issues (especially in the Palestine question), and Turkey's efforts of becoming part of Europe's security pacts and that of obtaining American commitment to her security. The study also analyses the impact of Turkish and British Palestine policies on the Middle East.

Though many studies have been made of the Palestine topic these have focused on Arab, Israeli or Western roles rather than the part played by the issue in Turkish foreign policy or in Anglo-Turkish relations. Despite the fact that few works, to some extent, deal with the Turkish perspective on the question in this period they do not examine the topic in depth and hence do not provide adequate information. Furthermore, these works not only suffer from the lack of using archival materials but also cover much longer periods leaving only a small space for this brief but very crucial period specified by this study.² So the present article is the major work which aims at filling this gap by using abundant archival resources available both in Turkish and especially English.

2 The works deserved to be named here are: Ömer E Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Orta Doğusuna Karşı Politikası 1945-1970*, Sevinç Matbaası, Ankara 1972; Abdülahat Akşin, *Türkiye'nin 1945'den Sonraki Dış Politika Gelişmeleri, Ortadoğu Meseleleri*, B. Kervan Matbaası, İstanbul 1959; Kemal H. Karpat, "Turkish and Arab-Israeli Relations", Karpat-Contributors, eds., *Turkey's Foreign Policy in Transition 1950-1974*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1975; Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Palestinian Question in Turkish Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19(2), 1993; İsmail Soysal, "70 Years of Turkish-Arab Relations and an Analysis on Turkish-Iraqi Relations", *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations*, 6, 1991; George Emanuel Gruen, *Turkey, Israel and the Palestine Question, 1948-1960*, University of Columbia, (Unpublished Doctora Thesis), New York 1970; Mahmut Bali Aykan, *Ideology and National Interest in Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Muslim World, 1960-1987*, University of Virginia, (Unpublished Doctora Thesis), Virginia 1988; Orhan Soysal, "An Analysis of the Influence of Turkey's Alignment with the West on the Conduct of Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-Arab Relations", Princeton University, (Unpublished Doctora Thesis), Princeton 1983. For all existing literature related to the Palestine issue, see, Chapter IV.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE PALESTINE QUESTION UP TO 1945

Palestine was a former Ottoman territory consisted of large groups of Arab majority and a small group of Jewish minority. The administration of the region remained in Arab hands, except for certain key posts which were held by the Ottomans. Both Arabs and Jews enjoyed full civil and political rights as the other inhabitants did. In the Parliamentary elections of 1908 the Arabs gained 60 seats while the Jews obtained 5 seats in the Ottoman Assembly. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Government had strongly opposed to Zionist plans for the settlement of a Jewish state in Palestine since the 1880's.³

However, this political position in Palestine began to change with the coming of the First World War. During the war, the Arabs joined with the Allies against the Ottomans when Britain pledged them, in the case of the Sherif Hussein and Sir H McMahon correspondence of 24 October 1915, to recognise the independence of Arab countries, including Palestine.⁴ However, towards the end of 1917, Britain gave another promise, which contradicted the above pledge, namely, the establishment of a national home to the Jews in Palestine. With this policy, Britain aimed at securing the support of both Arabs and Jews for the Allied cause.⁵ While, in the short run, this policy was successful, in the long run it proved a disaster when constant British efforts failed to compromise the expectations of both groups on the Palestine issue.

3 Henry Cattan, *The Palestine Question*, Croom Helm Ltd., USA 1988, p. 7-28; Karpas, *op. cit.*, p. 112-114; Michael Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1982, p. 3.

4 Baghdad to Foreign Office, 22 July 1948, FO 371/68374; McMahon to the Sherif of Mecca, 24 October 1915, AIR 1/2413; Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

5 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*, John Murray Publishers, London 2000, p. 72-77.

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At the end of the Great War, Palestine was placed under British mandate by the League of Nations in 1922. The main objective of Mandate government in Palestine was to pursue the implementation of the so-called 'Balfour Declaration' issued by Britain in 1917, indicating support for 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'.⁶ The Arabs of Palestine, however, strongly opposed to the British policy and this caused violent protestations throughout 1920s. While the Arabs wanted to achieve the independence of Palestine the Jews had expectations that they, with the help of Britain, would create a Jewish state in the same region.⁷ This hence was the origin of the Palestine Question, which continued through the 20th century between the Jews and Arabs.

In the 1930s, the Arabs further reacted to the British policies when a mass of Jewish immigration took place in Palestine from Central and Eastern Europe. The increasing level of Jewish immigration hence led a second phase of Arab rebellion in the years between 1936 and 1939. Though this rebellion did not bring any Arab military success or political concessions from Britain towards Arabs' aim of Palestine independence, it ensured the involvement of the Arab states to support the Palestinian Arabs and forced Britain to reassess its policy in favour of Arab demands.⁸ At this time, as global conflict was coming ever closer, the British Government reversed the policy of pursuing the spirit of the Balfour declaration to one of securing Arab cooperation.⁹ For this reason, to reach an agreement with the Arab states on the Palestine issue Britain invited the Arabs and the Jews to a conference in London in February 1939.

6 Michael Cohen, *The Origins and the Evolution of the Arab-Zionist Conflict*, The University of California Press, California 1987, p. 143-144; Cattan, *loc.cit.*

7 *Baghdad to Foreign Office*, Translation of Memorandum Handed to HM Ambassador in Iraq by the Iraqi MFA, 22 May 1948, FO 371/68374; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 4-5.

8 Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 28; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 89-92.

9 Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 92-93.

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The outcome of the conference was the announcement of the White Paper of May 1939, which contained the new British policy for Palestine. It stated that the British Government was no longer to follow the policy of organizing a national Jewish home in Palestine. Moreover, it provided for the establishment of a Palestinian state within ten years and a strict limit of Jewish immigration into the area.¹⁰ The Arab states were satisfied with this outcome; however, neither the Palestinians nor the Jews accepted the new British policy.

Through the period of the 1930s, though Turkey began to develop its relations with a number of the Middle Eastern states, which culminated with the establishment of the Sadabad Pact in 1937, she kept herself away from involvement in the Palestine Question and took a neutral position between the Arabs and Jews on the question. Turkey regarded the issue, in general, as, first, an internal Arab matter and then as an issue between Britain and the Arab states.¹¹

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Unlike the inter-war period, the Palestine question began increasingly to occupy Anglo-Arab and American attention after the end of the Second World War. However, as it was still a regional issue, its effects on international politics were less significant than later. During this time, the flow of many thousands of Jewish immigrants into Palestine provoked a reaction both from the Arab states and the US. While the Arab states put pressure on Britain for more restrictions on the level of immigration, Washington tried to remove London's restrictions.

10 CP (45) 156, 8 September 1945, Report by the Lord of President of the Council, CAB 119/148; Baghdad to Foreign Office, 22 May 1948, FO 371/68374; George Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1952, p. 10.

11 Knatchbull-Hugessen, Ankara to War Cabinet, 19 July 1940, FO 371/24548; Karpat, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

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In August 1945, President Truman asked Britain to admit 100.000 immigrants at once to Palestine. This was impossible for Britain to accept, since it would overturn the British White Paper policy. The disagreement between London and Washington over Palestine policy was to continue in the following years and began to sour relations between the two allies. Simultaneously, the Palestine question began increasingly to colour Anglo-Turkish and Arab relations.

Since the British Palestine policy was based on the implementation of the White Paper policy of 1939 in favour of the Arab states, it positively affected relations between Britain, Turkey and the Arab world. Britain, at this time, concluded that in order to secure its vital interests in the Middle East against the Soviet threat it had to obtain the goodwill and confidence of the Arabs over the Palestine issue. As a long-term policy, it planned to grant gradual independence to Palestine within five years, in line with Arab demands.

As the Palestine question increasingly became a burden on Britain and damaged Anglo-American relations Churchill, on 6 July 1945, instructed the Colonial Office and the Chiefs of Staff (COS) to consider the idea of transferring British responsibility for Palestine to the US. By 10th July the COS prepared their report, indicating that¹²

"[Palestine] was the bottleneck of all land communications between Africa and Asia and in addition, is a main centre for air routes between the UK and the eastern parts of the British Empire. It includes one, and may possibly later include two, of the oil terminals of the Eastern Mediterranean."

Thus, from the strategic point of view, the British Palestine policy was to secure effective control of a belt of Arab territory linking the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf.

¹² JP (45) 167 (Final), 10 July 1945, CAB 84/73.

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The report went on to emphasise that the situation in Palestine was one of the major factors in the internal security of the Middle East. Thus, the repercussions of any policy unfavourable to Palestinian Arabs would be likely to spread to the whole Middle East. Finally, it drew the conclusion that transferring the mandate to the US could cause Britain to lose its predominant position in the Middle East. Moreover, if Washington pursued an extreme pro-Zionist stance, this would lead to alienation of the Arabs and might cause the Russians to set themselves up as the champion of the Arab cause. For these reasons the Committee opposed the handing over of the mandate to the US.¹³

At this time, Labour's election in July 1945 did not bring any change in Britain's policy on Palestine. Ernest Bevin, the new British Foreign Minister, who most influenced Labour's Palestine policy, continued to follow the policy of his predecessor.¹⁴ For his government, the only feasible course which received general consent from the concerned departments, including the COS and Cabinet Palestine Committee, was to adhere to the White Paper regulations for the short term, as the previous government had done. This was because, by following this policy, Britain planned to avert the hostility of both Arabs and Jews and considered that this was the way to prevent harsh criticism from the US government in this area.¹⁵

Thus, bearing in mind these considerations, the Cabinet Palestine Committee recommended that His Majesty's Government (HMG) should continue to follow the White Paper policy until the promulgation of a new policy and every effort should be made to persuade the Arabs to

13 *Ibid.*

14 The main common feature regarding the Palestine policy between Churchill and Bevin was their endeavours to persuade the US to become involved in Palestine. See copy of minute from Prime Minister to the Colonial Secretary and the COS Committee, 6 July 1945, CAB 84/73; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 16-17.

15 CP (45) 156, 8 September 1945, Report by Cabinet Palestine Committee; FO to Colonel Oliver Stanley, CO, 26 July 1945, Report on Palestine Policy by Foreign Office, CAB 119/148; JP (45) 167 (Final), 10 July 1945, Report by the Joint Planning Staff on Palestine, CAB 84/73.

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agree to a continuation of Jewish immigration for the time being. It also recommended that Washington should be informed that HMG intended to refer the longterm policy to the United Nations (UN).¹⁶

Hence, the White Paper arrangement continued to be the formal British policy until the end of the mandate, though there occurred some joint Anglo-American attempts to find a solution to the problem. However, these attempts were doomed to failure because they were not decisive steps and were accepted neither by the Arabs nor by the Jews. In the meantime, the political situation was getting worse in Palestine. From October 1945 onwards the Jews began to conduct their terrorist activities, attacking British officials and personnel with the aim of driving the British out of Palestine. Moreover, relations between the Arabs and the Jews were getting tense.¹⁷

This period represented for Turkey the beginning of her involvement in this question, in which she had so far adopted a non-involvement policy towards Palestine. Turkey began to involve in the Palestine question for the first time, in the spring of 1946, during the Turco-Iraqi discussions. In the discussions, the Iraqi Premier, Tawfik Suwaidi, communicated his demand to Turkey that a pledge of Turkish support over Palestine should be included in the treaty as a condition for the ratification of the Turco-Iraqi agreement of March 1946. Turkey, since late 1945, had worked hard to conclude a treaty of friendship with Iraq in the context of its new regional policy. This was a policy of cooperation with the Arab states especially those which were closest to Britain in order to reinforce its borders against the possible Soviet encroachments.¹⁸

16 CP (45) 156, 8 September 1945, Report by Cabinet Palestine Committee; Foreign Office to Colonel Oliver Stanley, Colonial Office, 26 July 1945, Report on Palestine Policy by Foreign Office, CAB 119/148; JP (45) 167 (Final), 10 July 1945, Report by the Joint Planning Staff on Palestine, CAB 84/73.

17 DO (47) 83, 5 November 1947, Cabinet Defence Committee Palestine, CAB 131/4; Foreign Office Minute, 14 October 1948, FO 371/68382; Cohen, 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 118-124.

18 Further information see, Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, "British Attitude towards Turkey's Policies in the Middle East, (1945-47)", *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 33, 2000, p. 257-270.

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At this time, Turkey was under the Soviet threat which demanded certain territories in the East and bases in the Straits. Turkey's immediate reaction was to ask British and later American support to thwart the Soviet danger. Though Turkey asked for the US support Washington remained indifferent towards Turkish affairs until the beginning of 1946. Britain hence was the only country which had a formal commitment to Turkey's security under the terms of the Anglo-Turkish Alliance of 1939. In order to protect its vital interests in the Middle East Britain swiftly rendered its diplomatic and political support for Turkey as it saw Turkey as the last bulwark against the possible Soviet advance southwards.

In response to Suwaidi's request for a formal Turkish pledge on the Palestine Question the Turkish delegate stated that Turkey could not include officially such a promise in the treaty. As the Jews had a strong influence in the US and some influence in Britain, and Turkey needed the support of both countries, Turkey's concern was that such an official promise might arouse Jewish hostility to Turkey.¹⁹

Though the Turkish delegate avoided giving an official pledge of support, they rendered a verbal promise to support the Arab case on Palestine in case of need. As the main objective of Turkish Middle Eastern policy was based on strategic considerations, which pursued a closer collaboration with the Hashemite states (Iraq and Jordan) against the communist bloc, it was natural that Turkey should favour a pro-Arab policy, which was compatible with the British policy towards Palestine.

Eventually, the Iraqi Government had to be satisfied with the private spoken Turkish promise of support over Palestine and the expectation of formal Turkish support in case of need.²⁰ At the same time, the Iraqi

19 Ankara to Foreign Office, 15 March 1946, FO 371/52408; Cairo to Foreign Office, 20 November 1946, FO 141/1122.

20 Stonehewer Bird to Foreign Office, 2 May 1946, FO 371/52409; Baghdad to Foreign Office, 20 May 1946, FO 371/52409.

Government intended to remind Turkey about its grievances linked with the activities of a Turkish ship, half-owned by the state, which was carrying illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine.²¹

The observations of Sir David Kelly, the British Ambassador in Ankara, whom the Turks had always approached for suggestions and comments on the issues regarding Arab affairs, further elaborated the nature of Turkey's Palestine policy. In his report to Clement Atlee, the British Prime Minister, he stated that Turkey saw more advantages in following a pro-Arab attitude in Palestine *vis-à-vis* the Zionists.²² Kelly indicated that Turkey in general approved British policy in Palestine and endeavoured to reconcile the feelings of the Arabs with British policy. The Turkish apprehension was that any power vacuum left by Britain could be filled by Russian infiltration.²³

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In this period, as the Palestine problem turned into a major international issue it began to occupy a central place in Anglo-Turkish policies in the Middle East. This period witnessed a close and increasing Anglo-Turkish collaboration. As the available documentary evidence suggest, Turkey's involvement in the Palestine question stemmed from two main reasons: first, Turkey's need to collaborate with the Arab states (notably the Hashemite states) against communist infiltrations; second, her search for security against the Soviet threat.²⁴

21 *Ibid.*

22 Ankara to Attlee, 25 November 1946, FO 141/1122.

23 Kelly to Foreign Office, Annual Report on Turkey for the Year 1947, 15 January 1948, FO 371/72540; See Ömer Rıza Doğrul, "Orta Şarkın Göbeğinde Bir Sovyet Volkanı", *Cumhuriyet*, 19 December 1947; *Cumhuriyet*, 4 January 1948.

24 Bilgin, 2000, *op. cit.*, p. 257-264.

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During this period, Ankara, after some unsuccessful attempts to obtain a formal American commitment, came to believe that she could only realise this objective through British mediation. This naturally depended on Turkey's capacity to assist Britain in its difficulties in the Middle East. Besides, as Ankara thought, it was Britain which had brought about the initial US involvement in the Near East through the Truman Doctrine. Moreover, though the Truman Doctrine was a great relief to Turkey, it did not provide a binding commitment to Turkey's security, and hence Britain remained the only Western power which had a formal commitment to Turkey through the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 1939.²⁵

Therefore, one could safely assume that Turkey's Palestine policy was an extension of her overall security policy. This security could only be provided by Britain and the US. Ankara could expect assistance from London if she rendered all possible help to Britain on Middle Eastern issues. Hence, Ankara and London had a mutual need for each other's help in order to counter their difficulties. Moreover, in British thinking, Turkey was the last barrier against the Soviet Union. If Turkey was to be lost in one way or another, then not only all the British interests in the Middle East would be greatly endangered but also Britain would suffer, especially from the economic point of view. As a result, this mutual need between the two countries necessitated the closest cooperation between each other.

In effect, from 1947 onwards, two courses were open to Britain: one was its need to collaborate with the US, which pursued a pro-Zionist policy, because of increasing British economic and military dependence on the Americans. The other was to carry on the implementation of the White Paper policy, which would satisfy the Arab demands of finally granting independence to Palestine as a unitary state. The Cabinet

²⁵ Charles to McNeil, Annual Review for Turkey for 1949, FO 371/87933. Though France was also bound to come to Turkey's assistance in the event of a threat and reaffirmed the validity of Anglo-Turkish-Franco Treaty on 26 July 1948, Turkey nevertheless did not much count on French help.

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Palestine Committee in its report, which was endorsed by the COS, on 22 August 1945, had brought out the importance of reconciling Arab demands with British interests:²⁶

“The attitude of the Arab states to any decision which may be reached is a matter of the first importance. The Middle East is a region of vital consequence to Britain and the British Empire. It forms the nodal point in the system of communications, by land, sea and air, which links Great Britain with India, Australia and the Far East; it is also the Empire’s main reservoir of mineral oil...”

Therefore, though the security of these interests was largely based on the goodwill and confidence of the Middle Eastern states, this was closely related to the future of Palestine, which became a major concern at the centre of Arab politics. However, Britain had to abandon this policy by adopting the first option as its Palestine policy in order not to prejudice its cooperation with the US.²⁷

Eventually, Britain referred the Palestine question to the UN on 14 February 1947 when it failed to obtain the agreement of the Arabs and the Jews for its long term policy, which would have given gradual independence to Palestine within five years with a further immigration of 100,000 Jews.²⁸ Simultaneously, the existing economic hardships, the fuel shortages and sterling crisis in Britain made it seem to Whitehall an ideal moment to quit Palestine.²⁹ Moreover, the increasing Jewish programme of terror and US pressures to grant permission to the thousands of

²⁶ CP (45) 156, 8 September 1945, Cabinet Palestine Committee, CAB 119/148.

²⁷ ME (0), 14, 24 April 1947, CAB 134/500; Foreign Office minute by Mr Wright, 30 October 1949, FO 371/75080; Confidential Report by Foreign Office on the Re-establishment of the British Position in the Middle East, 8 March, 1952, FO 371/98251.

²⁸ FRUS, 1947, Vol. V, p. 1005-1068; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

²⁹ Wm. Roger Louis, “Britain and the Middle East After 1945”, L. Carl Brown, eds., *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London&New York 2001, p. 26.

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the Jewish immigrants to Palestine were among the reasons which contributed to this decision.³⁰

The UN General Assembly (GA) in order to examine the Palestine question set up a special committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) on 15 May 1947. Though the Arab states and Turkey voted against it, a majority of the Assembly voted for the establishment of this committee.³¹ After the establishment of UNSCOP, it went to Palestine between 16 June and 18 July to investigate the problems of the region and to prepare its report to the UN. On 31 August UNSCOP submitted two plans: a majority and a minority plan. According to the majority plan, Palestine should be partitioned into three parts; an independent Arab state, an independent Jewish state and the city of Jerusalem to be placed under UN Trusteeship. The minority plan suggested an independent federal state, which the Arabs advocated, following a three-year transitional period, with Jerusalem nominated as capital of the federal state.³²

While these discussions were taking place in the UN, Britain, bearing in mind the costs of the mandate to its war-weakened economy and its damage to Anglo-American relations, including the increasing Jewish violence to its officials, declared at the UN on 26 September 1947 that it would terminate the Palestine mandate at a later date.³³ Eventually, the majority plan came before the General Assembly for a final vote on 29 November 1947. While Turkey voted with the Arab states against it, the majority vote, under strong US influence, favoured the partition plan.

30 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1000-1005; Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 30. One of such acts of terrorism occurred when Jewish terrorists blew up the King David Hotel, one of the British Army Headquarters, killing 91 persons. See, Ritchie Owendale, "Britain and the End of the Palestine Mandate, 1945-1948", Aldrich and Hopkins, eds., *Intelligence Defence and Diplomacy: British Policy in the Post-war World*, Frank Cass, London 1994, p. 137.

31 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1085. During the Vote Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey opposed the report of the committee.

32 Baghdad to Foreign Office, Translation of Memorandum Handed to HM Ambassador by the Iraqi MFA, 22 May, 1948, FO 371/68374; FRUS, *op. cit.*, p.1107-1143.

33 Elizabeth Monroe, "Mr Bevin's Arab Policy", Albert Hourani, ed., *St Anthony's Papers*, no.11, Chatto&Windus, London 1961, p. 32.

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Britain abstained during the vote.³⁴ Thus, this outcome constituted the gate which the Western Powers themselves opened to endless trouble and complications for Western interests in the Middle East.

As the strategic and security concerns were the most influential factors which had shaped Turkish foreign policy so far, the Palestine problem was considered by the Turkish authorities from these two points of view. It appears from the materials consulted that Turkey, during this period, was convinced that Russia was trying to create a sphere of influence in the Middle East and thereby planning to undermine the Turkish regime. It was believed that one of the fertile grounds for Soviet policy was Palestine, where a mass of Jewish immigrants had migrated from the communist bloc countries. Moreover, the Turkish authorities were aware that the Jewish plans had already been supported by the Soviets and their satellites during the UN discussions. These views were also shared by the Turkish Press. The support given by the Soviets, the enemy of Turkey, to the partition plans in the UN increased the Turkish suspicion that the USSR was trying to set up a Jewish state in the Palestine under its influence.³⁵

These views were also shared by Turkish military authorities. Since the partition resolution, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) had expressed its apprehension about Palestine, given the possibility that Soviet troops would obtain a foothold in southern Asia Minor. In this regard the Turkish military even considered to call up additional groups of men, who had

34 Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 126-127; FRUS, *op. cit.*, p.1291; The majority plan was advocated by the representatives of Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay. The minority plan was supported by India, Iran and Yugoslavia. While both the US and USSR played leading roles in obtaining a vote favourable to partition, as the American documents reveal, without the US pressures in the UN discussions 'the necessary two-thirds majority in the General Assembly could not have been obtained'. See FRUS, 1948, Vol. V, part 2, p. 548.

35 Kelly to Foreign Office, 22 December 1948, FO 371/68603; FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1231-1291. For the views of Turkish Press see, *Ayin Tarihi*, (the Monthly Published Journal by the Turkish Government) no. 170, January 1948; See also *Cumhuriyet*, 04 December 1947.

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been demobilised in the previous autumn on account of their cost, to the military service.³⁶ At this time, the general Turkish Middle Eastern policy was based on the establishment of a security zone around Turkey's borders by collaborating with the Arab states, particularly those which had alliances with Britain.

Turkey's support for the Arab case on Palestine in the UN discussions produced very favourable reactions from the Arab states. The Arabs in various countries, including the Palestinians themselves, began to announce that they would prefer Turkish rule to that of any other foreigner if there must be a foreign administration in Palestine.³⁷ Even in Syria, with which Turkey had sometimes had tense relations because of Hatay (Alexandretta) issue, the Turkish support for the Arab position had positive repercussions. Upon the Turkish vote in favour of the Arabs in the General Assembly of the UN on 29 November, Shukri al-Quwatli, the Syrian President, sent a congratulatory message to the Turkish President to thank him for the Turkish support. Moreover, the Syrian papers paid tribute to Turkey by calling her 'the defender of Palestine'.³⁸ It also had positive effects on Iraqi Nationalists' views about Turkey and contributed to the exchange of ratifications of the Turco-Iraqi treaty in Baghdad on 10 May 1948.³⁹

However, as mentioned before, the Turkish vote in the General Assembly did not change the result and the majority of the vote went on against the Arab wishes. While this result gave a great joy to the Jews, since it provided them with a national state, it came as a shock to the Arab World. The Arabs, in their meeting in Cairo between 8 and 17

36 Kelly to Foreign Office, 15 January 1948, Annual Report on Turkey for the year 1947, FO 371/72540.

37 British Middle East Office, (BMEO) to M.R. Wright, 10 April 1948, FO 371/68382.

38 Kürkçüoğlu, *op. cit.*, p. 23. See also, Abdülhahat Akşin, "Türkler ve Araplar", *Orta Doğu*, 4(34), February 1965, p. 2-4.

39 Baghdad to Foreign Office 11 June 1947; 1 July 1947, FO 371/67304; Henry Mack, Baghdad to Bevin, 8 June 1948, FO 371/68483.

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December 1947, decided to oppose the resolution. A civil war between the Arabs and the Jews began after the adoption of the UN resolution of 29 November.⁴⁰

Under these circumstances, Bevin, on 1 January 1948, instructed Lord Inverchapel, the British Ambassador in Washington, to invite a strong American intervention urging the Jews in Palestine to restrain their terrorism and to force them to enter into conciliation with the Arabs, as the UN plan had not worked.⁴¹ However, the State Department responded that there was no chance of getting concessions from the Jews at the present time and some alternatives should be considered, such as suspending of the partition plan and extending of the trusteeship scheme to the whole the Palestine.⁴²

In the worsening situation in Palestine, the US government eventually took action and asked the Security Council on 19 March 1948 to suspend the partition plan and instead to establish a trusteeship system under the UN authority until the Arabs and Jews could reach an agreement. However, neither of the two groups nor Britain accepted the US plan.⁴³ Eventually, Britain, on 2 April, brought the Palestine question before the General Assembly and then asked it to take over the responsibility of the future of Palestine.⁴⁴

At this juncture, Anglo-Turkish consultations began to increase as Turkey became worried about the situation in Palestine. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs (MFA) expressed his anxiety to Kelly on 24 April that the USSR might gain ground in the area at any moment. For this reason he intended to press the Arab governments to make them

40 Report by Foreign Office Research Department on Palestine question, 14 October 1948, FO 371/68382.

41 Foreign Office to Washington, 1 January 1948, FO 371/68402.

42 Washington, Lord Inverchapel to Foreign Office, 5 January 1948, FO 371/68402.

43 Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43; Wm Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Postwar Imperialism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1984, p. 511-513.

44 FRUS, 1948, Vol. V, part 2, p. 961.

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realise the Soviet danger and to urge them to collaborate with Britain. The Turkish Secretary-General had already sent instructions to the Turkish representatives to convince the Arab governments of the necessity to cooperate with Britain against Soviet infiltration in the Middle East.⁴⁵

On the eve of the British surrender of the Palestine mandate, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which empowered a UN mediator in Palestine to examine the Palestine issue and to promote a peaceful solution for the future of Palestine. Count Folke Bernadotte, a Swedish Ambassador, was appointed to take this task on 20 May 1948.⁴⁶ Britain finally terminated its mandate over Palestine on 15 May 1948. Thereafter the state of Israel was immediately proclaimed and it was swiftly recognised by Washington, followed by the USSR and its satellites. The new state of Israel therefore became a target to the great powers which sought to gain influence at each other's expense in the area.⁴⁷

The rapid US recognition of Israel was criticised by both the British and Turkish governments. Bevin expressed his regret on 22 May to the US Ambassador that early American recognition of Israel had destroyed the British plans to urge the Arab states to agree to the US truce proposals and it also endangered Western interests throughout Middle East.⁴⁸

Following the British course, the Turkish Government, after the outbreak of hostilities in Palestine, made clear her view to the US that she could not agree with the US Palestine policy because of its divergence from the realities in the region.⁴⁹ In mid-May-1948, in conversation with the US authorities the Turkish Consul in Jerusalem expressed his confusion

45 Kelly, Ankara to Foreign Office, 13 March 1948; Mack to Foreign Office, 10 April 1948; Ankara to Foreign Office, 24 April 1948, FO 371/68385.

46 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 979-1135

47 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 551; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

48 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1034-1036. Without having at first a solution between the Arabs and the Jews the emergence of the State of Israel was not favoured by the Turkish Press. Israel was also seen as a new Soviet's satellite by those circles. See *Ayin Tarihi*, no.174, May 1948, p. 22-134.

49 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

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that 'I am entirely unable [to] understand the US policy. On [the] one hand, you help Greece and Turkey and on [the] other hand you undermine us from [the] rear'.⁵⁰ Later, this view was further confirmed on 25 June when the Turkish MFA expressed his disappointment to Kelly that Washington's actions would further complicate matters in the Middle East.⁵¹

Subsequently, the Arab states interfered in the war on 15 May in order to protect Palestinian Arabs from being massacred by Jews.⁵² However, the Arabs were unprepared and their armies faced severe setbacks against the Jews because of the disunity of their command, rivalry and lack of weapons and ammunitions. The war ceased on 11 June 1948 with the adoption of an armistice arranged by the Security Council. After a month, hostilities resumed and lasted for ten days when another armistice came into force on 18 July. However, this was not the end of the war, for Israel broke the truce and the war between the Arabs and Israel was to continue until the spring of 1949.⁵³

At the end of the first fight, from 11 June onwards, the Arabs went short of weapons as the British war supplies had been suspended at the beginning of the same month, while the Jews, as the British Ambassador in Baghdad complained, received war materials and reinforcements freely.⁵⁴ When the Arab states were desperate for arms, the Arab League

50 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1030.

51 Kelly to Foreign Office, 25 June 1948, FO 195/2614.

52 Baghdad to Foreign Office 22 May 1948, Translation of memorandum handed to the HM Ambassador in Baghdad by the Iraqi MFA, FO 371/68374; Report by Foreign Office, 14 October 1948, FO 371/68382; FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1002-1003; Cattán, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

53 Conversation between the British Ambassador and Iraqi PM, 29 December 1948; Baghdad to Foreign Office, 30 December 1948, FO 624/126; Cattán, *op. cit.*, p. 54-57. According to Cattán, the number of Arab Armies which consisted of men from Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia were 20,000 while the Jewish army totalled 60,000 to 80,000. This fact had previously been confirmed by Lord Tedder from the Air Ministry, as he had indicated that the Jews were numerically superior by four to one and they were better armed. See FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1049-1200; Akşin, *op. cit.*, p. 84-87.

54 Secretary of State to Mr Goodrich, MP, 15 June 1948, FO 371/68666; Baghdad to Foreign Office, 10 December 1948, FO 624/126. In fact, British intelligence sources had already established in their report that though the US had banned arms exports to the ME, the Jews continued to receive the US arms in secret. See Palestine to Foreign Office, 2 January 1948, FO 371/68635. In effect, the whole file deals with arms sales to Jews.

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requested Iraq to open informal talks with Turkey about her possible assistance over Palestine. For this purpose, it was reported that Naji Shawkat and Hikmet Suleiman were to be appointed to conduct the task.⁵⁵ However, no result came from this attempt. In reality, Turkey had already refused to supply arms to Syria and Lebanon when their representatives made their requests in late December 1947 on the grounds that Turkey received arms from the US and 'if Turkey furnished arms to the Arabs to combat a UN decision supported by the US this would place Turkey in an impossible position'.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, as the Palestine question turned into a catastrophe and severely damaged Western influence in the area, Turkey's importance began to increase both in Western and Arab quarters since she emerged as a possible mediator to find some satisfactory solution between the Arabs and Jews. For this purpose, it was reported that Prince Tallal of Transjordan planned to visit Ankara towards the end of July, to sound out the possibility of Turkey's mediation between the two sides.⁵⁷ Upon this report, Necmeddin Sadak, the Turkish MFA, expressed the view that Turkey did not want to act without having American and British consent.⁵⁸

After the first truce, the UN mediator, Count Bernadotte, offered his proposals which sought a compromise between the Arabs and Jews towards the end of June for consideration, but they were rejected by both parties.⁵⁹ Consequently, Bernadotte drew up his final report and presented it to the UN Secretary-General on 16 September 1948. After suggesting the appointment of a United Nations Conciliation Commission (UNCC) to solve the acute problems between the Jews and Arabs, he emphasised

55 Minutes by the British Embassy, Ankara, 21 June 1948, FO 195/2614. Hikmet Suleiman was a brother of Mahmout Shawkat who was one of well known leaders of the CUP. Naji Shawkat was the former Iraqi Premier and Minister of Justice.

56 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1315; Kelly to Bevin, Turkey: Annual review for 1948, 12 January 1949, FO 424/289.

57 British Embassy, Istanbul to British Embassy, Ankara, 30 July 1948, FO 195/2614.

58 *Ibid.*

59 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p.1159-1162, 1401; Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

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that the definition of frontiers between the two sides should accord with the resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 29 November 1947.⁶⁰

He further proposed that the disposition of the territory of Palestine outside the borders of the Jewish state 'should be left to the governments of the Arab states in full consultation with the Arab inhabitants of Palestine'; but he recommended that these areas could be merged with Transjordanian territory. He also suggested that the Arab refugees should be returned to their homes in Jewish-controlled territory at the earliest possible date and the UN Conciliation Commission (CC) should supervise their repatriation resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation.⁶¹

On 28 September the General Assembly prepared a draft resolution which appointed a UNCC to undertake these recommendations. Initially the Americans proposed that the commission should comprise the representatives of UK, US (USA), Turkey, France and Belgium, as Britain had suggested earlier. The British Foreign Office welcomed the US proposal. It thought that British membership in the commission was inevitable, because Britain maintained the strongest influence in the Middle East and had had long experience in Palestine. The particular British interest was on the division of the territories of Arab Palestine. Britain wanted this area to be included in the territory of Transjordan.⁶²

The Foreign Office was also delighted to have Turkish participation in the commission. It thought that as Turkey was on very good terms with Transjordan, she would assist Britain in the realisation of the above plan. It further thought that the participation of both Britain and Turkey would secure Arab confidence in the commission, as both countries were known

60 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1403-1406; From UNGA, Paris (UKDEL) to Foreign Office, 28 September 1948, FO 371/68590.

61 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1403-1406; From UNGA, Paris (UKDEL) to Foreign Office, 28 September 1948, FO 371/68590.

62 From UNGA, Paris, (UKDEL) to Foreign Office, 28 September 1948; Foreign Office to UNGA, (UKDEL), Paris, 29 September 1948, FO 371/68590; *Cumhuriyet*, 16 December 1948.

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to be pro-Arab. These views were shared by the Americans as well. On the day of the selection by the General Assembly for the membership of the CC on 12 December 1948, the US representatives thought that Turkey was moderately pro-Arab and its participation in the Commission might make it easier to persuade the Arab opinion of the impartiality of the new committee.⁶³

The General Assembly consequently voted the draft resolution, which proposed the establishment of the CC to take over the functions of UN Mediator on 11 December 1948. At this time, while Turkey voted in favour of the Commission, the Arab states, as well as the Soviets and their satellites, cast their votes against it. However, this did not represent, as the traditional Turkish academic wisdom has so far suggested, a shift from previous Turkish Palestine policy, which was a pro-Arab stance. As Turkey was a possible candidate for the commission and its policy was in conformity with the UK, the Turkish idea, by favouring the CC, was to find out a satisfactory solution acceptable to the Arabs as soon as possible, as the stability of the Middle East was the greatest concern to Turkey. Moreover, Britain thought that Turkey would restore the balance in the commission against the pro-Jewish stance of the US.⁶⁴

Upon the adoption of the resolution for the establishment of UNCC, the General Assembly, on 12 December, elected France, Turkey and the US as members of the committee.⁶⁵ Turkey appointed H. Cahit Yalcin, a veteran journalist and strongly pro-British, as its representative on the commission in the beginning of 1949.

63 Foreign Office to UNGA, (UKDEL), Paris, 29 September 1948, FO 371/68590; FRUS, p.1663-1679.

64 Foreign Office to UNGA, Paris, (UKDEL), 29 December 1948, FO 371/68590; FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1663-1687. As a matter of fact, though the Arab states had voted against the resolution, they had the opportunity to prevent the adoption of the resolution by reaching the necessary two-thirds vote. But they did not defeat the resolution because they had hoped that the establishment of the proposed commission might provide some help to them. See FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1664-1665.

65 FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1663-1664. The committee of GA analysed the attitudes of the members of the commission as follows: for the US, as pro-Israel; Turkey was to be pro-Arab; France was to be neutral in general and slightly pro-Israel in particular.

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After Turkey's election to the UNCC, in his telegram to Kelly on 24 December, Bevin, concurring with the COS views, emphasised the parallel objectives of Britain and Turkey in the Middle East. He explained that the main motive behind the British Palestine policy was strategic considerations. The success of British defence plans in the Middle East depended on the internal strength of the Arab countries. The British plan to meet possible foreign aggression was based on the main British eastern Mediterranean base in Egypt and its complementary communications, which lay through Palestine. As the Soviets and their satellites had a strong influence on the Jewish state, 'Israel could not be relied on as an ally of the West in a crisis'.⁶⁶

The report continued that it was vital that the line of communications through the Auja-Beersheba-Hebron-Jerusalem-Amman road should be in friendly hands, namely in the territory of Transjordan. Bevin, in particular, stressed that the main British object, which the Turks fully subscribed, was

"...to produce a solid system of Middle East defence against aggression. We believe that this is in the interests of the Middle East States and of those powers everywhere who are determined to resist Communist pressure. In the particular case of Turkey, Arab States line her Southern frontier and a Moslem, though non-Arab, state her Eastern frontier. It is essential for the successful resistance of Turkey to Soviet pressure that the countries on her flanks should be as stable and as solidly defended as she is herself. This depends on the internal strength of these countries to which reference has been made above..."

⁶⁶ Foreign Office to Ankara, 24 December 1948, FO 371/68603; General John T. Crocker, GHQ MELF (General Headquarters, Middle East Land Forces), to the Viscount of Montgomery of Alamein, CIGS, 24 June 1948, WO 216/686.

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The report, however, concluded that the establishment of the new Jewish state had complicated and upset the stability in the Middle East; there was now an urgent need through CC to find a settlement between Arabs and Jews before it was too late.⁶⁷

On 25 December 1948, Kelly, acting on instructions from the Foreign Office, handed a memorandum, which contained Bevin's remarks and included the general British views with regard to the recent situation in Palestine, to the Turkish Secretary-General. The memorandum indicated that, at the time, the work of CC was to be limited to create a machinery to reach a satisfactory settlement between Arabs and Jews.⁶⁸

The initial reaction of the Turkish Secretary-General was complete agreement with the British views. Only on one point did he differ from Bevin's comments. This was the latter's idea that Turkey could render its assistance by bringing Egypt into collaboration with Transjordan and Britain.⁶⁹ However, the recent reports by Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, which accused Turkey of contributing to the economic potential of the Jewish state, made the Turkish Secretary-General very pessimistic on this point.⁷⁰ A few days later Sadak told the British Ambassador that he had briefed the Turkish UN delegate in accordance with British lines and stated that the CC was at present working well and

67 Foreign Office to Ankara, 24 December 1948, FO 371/68603; General John T. Crocker, GHQ MELF, to the Viscount of Montgomery of Alamein, CIGS, 24 June 1948, WO 216/686. Bevin had already explained the same views to the US Chargé d'Affaires four days earlier on 20 December 1948. See FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1680-1685.

68 Foreign Office Memorandum handed by Sir David Kelly to the Turkish Secretary-General, 25 December 1948, FO 195/2614; Ankara to Foreign Office, 25 December 1948, FO 371/68603; Foreign Office minute, Brief for S of S, 12 February 1949, FO 371/78668; Kelly to Bevin, Turkey: Annual Review for 1948, 12 January 1949, FO 424/289. The memorandum further stated that bearing in mind the common objectives between Turkey and Britain of a rapid establishment of stable conditions in the Middle East from both a political and a strategic point of view, the CC should work quickly and act with authority to arrange discussions between Jews and Arabs. It also emphasised that any recommendation for a settlement which favoured one side, and especially if it favoured the Jewish side, would prolong the state of chaos and suspense in the Middle East. The Foreign Office particularly stressed that if Turkey could reconcile the differences between Egypt and Transjordan, this would be 'of the utmost value'.

69 Ankara to Foreign Office, 25 December 1948, FO 371/68603.

70 *Ibid.*

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had already set itself up in Jerusalem though the preliminary negotiations for an armistice were still in progress. Sadak further stated that in early February 1949 he had received a report from Yalcin and he wished to ask for the comments of the Secretary of State.⁷¹

The complete Turkish agreement over British strategic views on Palestine was further confirmed by the Turkish Ambassador in London, Cevat Acikalin, when he had a conversation with Bevin on 11 January 1949. Acikalin stated that his government fully shared the British strategic and security view that the lines of communication of the Gaza-Auja-Beersheba-Hebron-Jerusalem-Amman road should be in Arab hands, namely between those of Egypt and Transjordan through the Negev.⁷² However, this plan was acceptable neither to the Jews nor to the Americans. Their idea was that the greater part of the Negev should be in Jewish hands.⁷³

In this period, Turkey's full collaboration with Britain in the Palestine Question had a close connection with her primary aim of becoming part of European security initiatives taking place in Europe from 1948 onwards. At this time, Turkey continued to seek security combinations in order to fortify her independence and territorial integrity against her superpower neighbour, the USSR. Turkey rendered all her help to Britain in the Middle East because Ankara, in return, expected to obtain further security guarantee through either entering into a Western pact or having a formal American commitment. It was thought that these objectives could only be realised with the help of Britain.

By this time, towards the end of June 1948, the birth of a new security pact, the Atlantic Union occurred. In its initial stage Turkey made

71 Minute by the Foreign Office: Brief for S of S's discussion with Turkish MFA, 12 February 1949, FO 371/78668. Though the Palestine CC initially produced some good work, it was however unable to achieve the settlement of the vital issue of Palestine Refugees because of the Israeli obstructions, and hence it lost its importance. See Akşin, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Cattan, *op. cit.*, p. 82-84.

72 Bevin to Kelly, 11 January 1949, FO 424/289.

73 *Ibid*; FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 1428-1683.

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many attempts to join this organisation. However neither Britain nor the US was willing to bring Turkey into this pact. This led Turkey to believe that she could realise her ultimate strategic objective through British mediation in return Turkey's collaboration with Britain in the Middle East, especially in the Palestine question. To put it in another words, one of the main reasons for Turkey's involvement in the Palestine Question was to realise her ultimate objective, which was to search for security against the USSR, with the support of Britain.

Moreover, about this time, Turkey's security anxieties on the prospect of further communist advance were increased by the following chain of events in the globe. The deterioration of the political situation in China, the escalation of tension in Europe with besiege of Berlin, and the deadlock between the forces of communists and the government in Greece caused great concerns to Turkey. These anxieties pushed Turkey even further to search for security Moreover, the political and military successes of Israel convinced the Turks, along with the British authorities, that the Jewish state would fall under communist influence.⁷⁴ Even Colonel Turkmen, Director of Turkish Military Intelligence, expressed on 8 March the general view to Kelly that in the present circumstances a Soviet attack on Turkey could happen at any time. He made it clear that, for this reason, Turkey attached the utmost importance to British assistance in case of need.⁷⁵

As the available documentary sources suggest, Turkey, after the escalation of the Cold War in Europe from 1947 onwards, worked hard to get a binding American commitment to her security but without success. When Turkey failed to obtain a formal American guarantee she turned to the United Kingdom to achieve her aim, which was designed to confer

74 Kelly to Bevin, Turkey: Annual Review for 1948, 12 January 1949, FO 424/289; Ekavi Athanassopoulou, *Turkey-Anglo-American Security Interests, 1945-52: The First Enlargement of NATO*, Frank Cass, London 1999, p. 90; See, *Cumhuriyet*, 15 December 1948, *Cumhuriyet*, 30 Mart 1949.

75 Kelly to Wallinger, Southern Dept., FO, 12 March 1948, FO 371/72544.

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formal obligations on the US through the British mediation. As a matter of fact, Turkey had always found Britain more convenient to collaborate with on international events. This was because, as the British Ambassador reported, the Republican government in Ankara had still 'greater faith in Great Britain than in the US for they believe that we [Britain] are more involved and understand conditions in Turkey and the Middle East better than the Americans'.⁷⁶ Moreover, during this period, Turkey still continued to rely primarily on British advice in the formulation of its policy towards the Soviet Union.⁷⁷

Turkey at the same time believed that it was Britain which had played a crucial role in bringing about US involvement in the security of the Near East when she herself had to withdraw from the area because of economic hardships at the beginning of 1947. However, from the Turkish point of view, though the American interests in the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine in Near Eastern Affairs increased her feelings of security thorough 1947, the US did not make a formal commitment to the area. Hence, from early 1948 onwards, without an additional guarantee the Doctrine itself, in due course, put Turkey in a difficult position *vis-à-vis* the Soviets when Europe was moving towards a regional security system in the face of the escalating Cold War in Europe and the increasing possibility of a global war.⁷⁸

During this period, the British position in the Middle East was getting worse as the extreme political situation in Palestine had fuelled anti-Western feelings in the area, especially after the UN decision on the

⁷⁶ Charles to Mc Neil, 4 January 1950, FO 424/290. In fact, until the end of his rule, the Turkish President, İnönü, had remained doubtful about the possible American attitude in case of any future Soviet demands on the Turkish Straits. See Conversation between President of the Republic, and General Sir John Crocker (C-in-C Middle East Land Forces) and HM Ambassador, 26 April 1950, FO 195/2636.

⁷⁷ Record of conversation between Mr Robertson and Turkish MFA, 17 March 1948; FO to Paris, 19 March 1948, FO 371/72544.

⁷⁸ Kelly to Foreign Office, 12 March 1948, FO 371/72544; Kelly to C.H. Bateman, Foreign Office 23 November 1948, FO 371/72544; Ankara to Foreign Office 24 November 1948; Minutes by Western Department, 24 November 1948; Arnold Toynbee, Ankara Palas Otel to Kelly, 5 November 1948, FO 371/72535.

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partition of Palestine. Britain needed an ally to cope with its difficulties in the region and found Turkey was ready to co-operate. The British position in the region was seriously undermined by the subsequent chain of events. Britain's relations with Egypt had already been strained over the deadlock on the Sudan issue. Their relations further declined from 1947 onwards upon the refusal of Britain to withdraw its troops from the Suez zone.

Another shock came to Britain in late January 1948 when the Treaty of Portsmouth, which had been signed between Britain and Iraq on 15 January 1948, was not ratified by the latter. As Britain preferred a bilateral to a multilateral approach in its defence relations with the Middle Eastern states, because of its problems with Egypt and the rise of Arab nationalism, Bevin regarded the treaty as a new model for a defence alliance, which was based on partnership with the regional states.⁷⁹

Therefore, the old Anglo-Iraqi agreement of 1930 was replaced with the Portsmouth treaty. With the new treaty Britain pledged to withdraw its military presence from Iraq in peacetime but gained the right to use Iraqi airfields and communications in war. However, soon after the signing of the treaty, public riots in Iraq forced the Baghdad government to repudiate it. Even some Iraqi politicians in the government claimed that the Portsmouth treaty laid down heavier conditions than the previous one and if a new model for the revision of the treaty was to be sought this model should be along the lines of the Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1939. Therefore,

79 Minute by Chargé d'Affaires, British Embassy, Baghdad, 21 January 1948, FO 624/128; Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*, The Univ. of North Carolina Press 1991, p. 59; David Devereux, *The Formulation of British defence Policy in the Middle East (1948-56)*, Macmillan Press, London 1990, p. 33-34.

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the tide of Arab nationalism destroyed Bevin's new partnership model for the Middle Eastern states.⁸⁰

Anti-British feelings, after the events in Egypt and Iraq, spread to Transjordan where Britain had maintained its strongest influence by subsidising the country with £3 million annually. Upon the request of King Abdullah of Transjordan in early 1948, the previous treaty in 1946 was terminated by the signing of a new one, which replaced direct British control with a joint defence board chaired by a British officer.⁸¹ These developments showed that British supremacy in the region was now hanging by a thread. When anti-British feelings spread throughout the region, Britain asked for Turkish help in overcoming her difficulties with the Arab states. This request was fully rendered by Turkey, which had adopted policy in line with Britain since the beginning of 1947.

As a result, the Turkish Secretary-General, on 2 March 1948, instructed the Turkish representatives in the Middle East to talk to the Arab governments about the importance of British military collaboration in the region.⁸² In reality, Turkey had already offered its good offices to Britain during Necmettin Sadak's, the Turkish Foreign Minister, conversation with Kelly on 26 January. Sadak told Kelly that Turkey could play a crucial bridging role between the British security interests in Europe and those in

80 Prince Regent to Bevin, 22 January 1948, FO 624/128; BMEO to Bernard Burrows, 17 February 1948, FO 371/68385; conversation between Sir H. Mack and S. Mustafa al Umari, Baghdad, 12 February 1948; conversation between Sir H. Mack and Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, Baghdad, 6 March 1948, FO 624/128. Bevin's new model not only suffered from the tide of Arab nationalism but also from the lack of economic resources. Bevin's idea was to develop economic and social projects in the Arab countries in order to ease the problem of poverty and hence to gain Arabs' sympathy. However, after the strong public protests in Iraq against the Portsmouth Treaty, Saudi Arabia also refused to sign a similar agreement with Britain. This was the end of Bevin's new model and hence Britain continued to stick to its existing treaties with the Arab states except in the case of Transjordan with which Britain managed to conclude a new treaty in early 1948. See Richard J. Aldrich-John Zametica, "The Rise and Decline of a Strategic Concept: The Middle East, 1945-51", Richard J. Aldrich, ed., *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-51*, Routledge, London and New York 1992, p. 255-256; Louis, *op. cit.*, p. 7-8.

81 Devereux, *op. cit.*, p. 36. After the treaty Transjordan was renamed Jordan.

82 Foreign Office minute by Mr Burrows, Eastern Dept., 17 March 1948, FO 371/68385.

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the Middle East.⁸³ Furthermore, in reaction to the strong Arab nationalist demands against the British presence in the Middle East, the Turkish representatives, including the Turkish press and radio, strongly supported the British position in Egypt and Iraq.⁸⁴

The good deeds of Turkey on Britain's behalf, in effect, were soon to bear fruit. The time was not yet too late for a possible Anglo-Turkish-Arab collaboration over the Middle Eastern defence pact. Moreover, the pro-Arab attitude of Turkey over Palestine made a good impression on the Arab states. However, the success of this collaboration would depend much on whether the opportunities were used or not.

Contemporaneously, the Eastern Department of the British Foreign Office concluded that Turkey had a strong influence on Iraq and Transjordan and some influence on Egypt and thus Turkish good offices could overcome some of the difficulties caused by the nationalist forces in these countries.⁸⁵ As it can easily be seen from the documents consulted, the Turkish influence, at this time, was running high with the Arab states because of the pro-Arab Turkish attitude over the Palestine issue.

Even in Syria, where she had long had difficulties over the Alexandretta issue, Turkey gained great respect because of her Palestine policy. At the beginning of June 1948 the Syrian President, in an interview with the special correspondent of the Turkish paper, *Cumhuriyet*, stated that: 'at the present stage of international affairs, the Arabs and Turks have adopted a co-operative stand against a number of dangers. The fact that Turkey supports in [the] Palestine case has strengthened the bonds of friendship uniting the Turks with the Arab states...'⁸⁶

83 Kelly to Foreign Office, 26 January 1948, FO 371/72534.

84 Foreign Office minute by Mr Burrows, 17 March 1948; Baghdad to FO, 24 April 1948, FO 371/68385.

85 Foreign Office minute by Mr Burrows, 17 March 1948, FO 371/68385.

86 Kelly to Eastern Dept., FO 371/68431.

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As the Middle East remained vital to British interests, Britain's policy towards the region in general and Palestine in particular, from political, strategic and economic view points, was based on the collaboration and good will of the Arab States in order to preserve its position in the area. Thus British interests necessitated a pro-Arab policy rather than favouring the Zionists, while the US Government followed a pro-Zionist policy, partly due to internal considerations.⁸⁷ The fervent US pro-Zionist stance was not only criticised by HMG but was also criticised by some American Middle Eastern representatives. The latter, towards the end of May 1948, began to openly condemn Washington's Zionist policy, which ignored American oil and economic interests in the Arab world, by emphasising that it was a result of the 'selfish purposes of Mr Truman's electoral campaign'.⁸⁸

The conflicting Anglo-American policies over the Palestine issue represented the lowest point in the relations between the two governments (in the Middle East) in the early post-war period. However, in late 1948 the situation was to change as the firm British pro-Arab policy was gradually transformed in favour of a more even-handed policy towards Arabs and Jews for the sake of improving Anglo-American relations.⁸⁹ This was because, as Monroe pointed out, the issue of Palestine did not represent 'a matter of life or death' to Britain at a time when the Soviet threat to Europe was becoming imminent after the chain of events starting with the

87 Lord Inverchapel to Foreign Office, 5 January 1948, FO 371/68402; British Embassy, Jedda to Eastern Dept., 4 April 1948, FO, FO 371/68382; Sir O Franks, Washington to Foreign Office, 1 October 1948, FO 371/68590.

88 Beirut to Foreign Office, 28 May 1948, FO 371/68374.

89 FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, p. 36,674; Monroe, *op. cit.*, p. 22-46. Though the Foreign Office still favoured a pro-Arab stance in the summer of 1948, British military circles began to emphasise the need of collaborating with the US to keep the Soviets out of the Middle East and thereby relieve Anglo-American political tension over their respective differences on the Arab-Jewish question. See Personal Letter from General Crocker to the CIGS, 24 June 1948, WO 216/686.

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communist coup in Prague reached its peak with the siege of West Berlin in 1948. In addition to this, the heavy British dependence on American economic and strategic support forced London to evaluate its Palestine policy by re-orienting it closer to the latter's policy in this critical period of the Cold War.

Moreover, at the beginning of 1949, the developments over the European security system, which were moving towards the establishment of the North Atlantic Pact with the participation of the US, was the decisive factor in the evolution of the new British Palestine policy. Since Britain maintained that any pact without US participation would not bring much security, the former could not afford to retain its contradictory policy over the Palestine issue, which had already damaged relations between the two countries. In this regard, the State Department, on 12 January 1949, made it clear to the British Ambassador that Britain followed a very different policy in Palestine from that of the US and emphasised the importance of the Middle East to the overall Anglo-American strategic position.⁹⁰

The State Department briefly explained the American position: first, it did not accept the British argument that the greater part of the Negev should be in Arab hands for strategic reasons, but rather it preferred the area should remain in the hands of a 'friendly state of Israel'; second, it wished to ensure at all costs that Israel should be oriented towards the West and HMG's policy 'of containing the Israelis ran the risk of permanently estranging them'.⁹¹

Therefore, bearing in mind these American reservations and including the strong criticism made by some Labour MPs and by opposition in Parliament to Bevin's Palestine policy, claiming that it did

90 Minute by Mr Beith, 22 March 1949, FO 371/75054.

91 *Ibid.* Britain, in the face of the strong American-Israeli combination was eventually forced to relinquish its insistence that Negev should be in the Arab hands which would connect Egypt with Transjordan. Even the UN resolution of 4 November 1948 which called the Israeli withdrawal from northern Negev did not stop the Jews to continue to occupy this territory. See Louis, *op. cit.*, p. 558-571.

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too much harm to Anglo-American relations, Bevin was forced to modify British policy towards Palestine. Thereafter, he decided to seek conciliation with Washington over the Palestine issue. Bevin communicated this desire in memoranda to the State Department on 13 and 18 January 1949. Soon after these attempts Britain announced her *de facto* recognition of Israel on 29 January 1949.⁹² However, these recent actions, as one of the officials in the Eastern Department concluded, 'had sunk [British influence] very low' in the Arab countries.⁹³

As Turkey was closely watching British actions in the Middle East, and as some editorials in Turkish newspapers rightly concluded, Ankara began to modify its policy, which was in accord with Britain, towards Israel in the light of the changed circumstances.⁹⁴ The aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war had weakened the Turkish idea of the capabilities of the Arab armies and the Arabs' political competence against the stronger state of Israel; hence Turkey lost interest in having an alliance with the Arabs against communism.⁹⁵ Additionally, by the end of January 1949 two of Turkey's major allies (the US and the UK) had already recognised the state of Israel. As Turkey was in full co-operation with Britain, especially in the Middle East, she could not remain indifferent towards the new British

92 *FRUS*, 1949, *op. cit.*, p. 658-711.

93 Minute by G.W. Furlonge, 20 April 1950, FO 371/82182. This was a great shock to the Arab leaders; they even declared that 'the Arabs would prefer to become a Russian Republic than Judaized by the Anglo-Saxon countries'. See Charles to Foreign Office, 24 April 1950, FO 195/2636. Britain concurrently, began to reassess its position in the Middle East in the light of the recent change in its attitude to Israel. At the meeting of Permanent Under Secretary's Committee in April 1949 it was recognised that the Middle East remained strategically vital to Britain as it had been in 1945. The Committee confirmed the importance of the area to Britain's defence as 'one of the principal areas from which offensive air action could be taken against the aggressor'. Britain now wanted to establish friendly relations with Israel as it would have strategic importance for the West in the case of a major war. But the committee emphasised that 'If Britain were to secure the friendship of Israel at the expense of the Arab countries, Britain would lose economically and strategically more than it gained'. Thus Britain had to follow a balanced policy between Israel and the Arab states and should be careful not to damage Anglo-Arab relations. These were the main lines of British Middle Eastern policy, as Ritchie Ovendale suggests, until the fall of the Attlee Government in October 1951. See Ovendale, *op. cit.*, p. 144-145.

94 See Ertem Harzem, *Son Posta*, 19 October 1948; A. K. Kiliç, *Vatan*, 9 January 1949; Kelly to Foreign Office, 15 January 1948, FO 371/72540.

95 Kelly to Foreign Office, 11 November 1948, FO 371/68431.

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move to Israel. Besides, Turkey thought that the influential Jewish lobby in the US would be useful in influencing American policy towards Turkey at a time when moves towards the Atlantic Pact were in progress.⁹⁶

Sadak, on 8 February 1949, in an interview with the Anatolian News Agency, signalled the new orientation of Turkish policy towards Israel. He conceded that 'the state of Israel is a fact. More than 30 states had already recognised it and the Arab representatives are conferring with the representatives of Israel'.⁹⁷ Soon after these statements Turkey accorded *de facto* recognition to Israel on 28 March 1949.⁹⁸

However, the Arabs strongly resented this Turkish act by charging Turkey with the 'betrayal of Islam' and themselves.⁹⁹ The Lebanese Minister in Ankara criticised Turkey as 'the first Muslim country' to recognise Israel.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Azzam Pasha, in conversation with a member the British Embassy in early September 1950, expressed the view that Turkey's recognition of Israel had been the main reason for the cool relations between the Turks and the Arabs.¹⁰¹ Even Iraq, thus far the most cordial Arab country to Turkey, became distant because of Turkey's toleration of Israel and its support for the Syrian dictator, Colonel Husni al-Zaim, who became the enemy of Iraq.¹⁰²

96 See the article by Ahmet Şükrü Esmer, an editorial, in the semi-official government paper, *Ulus*, 2 April 1948. By this time it also appeared that the Jewish state was not to be a Soviet satellite. In the Israeli elections of 25 January 1949 the moderate Mapai Party won a majority and this assured Turkey and the Western powers that Israel would favour a pro-Western policy. The Turkish press also voiced similar remarks and came to the conclusion that the Jewish state could be an element of order and peace in the Middle East. See FRUS, *op. cit.*, p. 702; *Vatan*, 25 January 1949; *Yeni Sabah*, 26 January 1949.

97 *Ayın Tarihi*, no 183, February 1949, p. 176.

98 Kürkçüoğlu, *op. cit.*, p. 32. In line with the government the Turkish Press at this time began to change its attitude towards Israel by stating that Israel now could become a Western and progressive state in the middle of its Arab neighbours. (BCA), *Turkish Foreign Ministry, See Supplement 7,03018 0102118 1083*, February-1949, See, *Ayın Tarihi*, no.183-184, March 1949.

99 See the criticism made by a member of the Egyptian Parliament which appeared on *Cumhuriyet*, 18 May 1949.

100 Statement by Ibrahim Bey el Ahdab, *Ulus*, 30 March 1949.

101 Sir R Stevenson to Attlee, 14 September 1950, FO 424/290.

102 S. H. Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social and Economic History*, Oxford Univ. Press, London 1956, p. 358; Beirut to FO, 23 April 1949, FO 371/75058.

Under these circumstances, therefore, from early 1949 onwards, the Anglo-Turkish position began to seriously decline in the Middle East. Soon after the loss of the opportunity for possible regional cooperation, the hasty Anglo-Turkish recognition of Israel, under US pressure, further worsened their relations with the Arab States. Given this unstable situation, Bevin began to search for ways of re-establishing stability in the Middle East and asked the COS to provide him with an up-to-date assessment on the possibility of a defence arrangement in the area.¹⁰³

In their report, on 30 March 1949, to the Foreign Office the Joint Planning Staff (JPS) concluded that there had been signs of closer relations between the Arab states and Turkey and the realisation of this kind of development would be advantageous to Britain since Turkey was the strongest state of the Middle East both militarily and politically.¹⁰⁴ However, the swift recognition of Israel by both Britain and Turkey was bitterly resented by the Arab states and left no room for Anglo-Turco-Arab collaboration to resume sooner at the time.

CONCLUSION

The year 1945 was an important juncture for Anglo-Turkish relations in the Middle East as the Soviet Union began to threaten the interests of the two countries in the region at the start of the Cold War. Hence, preservation of security and stability in the Middle East was vital to both Turkey and Britain in the post-1945 period. This was closely related to the future of the Palestine which became a major concern to the Arab states. The danger of the Soviet expansion thus necessitated the closest cooperation between Turkey and Britain.

¹⁰³ *Report for the Ministry of Defence, and Foreign Office by the Joint Planning Staff, JPS, 30 March 1949, DEFE 4/20.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

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Turkey's Palestine policy was an extension of her overall security policy. In Turkish idea, Turkey's security could only be provided by Britain and the US. Ankara could expect assistance from London if she rendered all possible help to Britain on Middle Eastern issues, especially in the Palestine question. This hence brought about an increasing Turkey's involvement in the Palestine question. For Britain, the political deterioration in Palestine, which became a major factor in the Arab politics, began to threaten its entire interests in the Middle East. Britain, therefore, needed a regional ally such as Turkey to solve its problems in the region at a time when Anglo-Arab relations were in a state of steady deterioration because of heightening tension in the Palestine Question. Furthermore, Britain regarded Turkey as the last bulwark in front of the Soviets before they could approach the oil-rich Arab Middle East.

Both Britain and Turkey, until early 1949, maintained that Soviet Russia was planning to undermine the stability of the Middle East by trying to create a sphere of influence in the area. A fertile ground for this purpose was Israel, where many thousands of Jewish immigrants had flowed in from the countries of the communist bloc. Moreover, the Soviet Bloc's support for Jewish claims in the UN discussions had already increased Anglo-Turkish suspicions. However, from 1949 onwards their view began to change towards recognising the state of Israel in the face of American pressure and Israel's orientation to the West.

The documentary evidence shows that there was a close link between Turkey's involvement in the Palestine question and Turkey's search for becoming a member of European security pacts. Anglo-Turkish relations reached their climax in the Middle East at a time when various European defence plans were in progress, especially in the second half of 1948. Since Turkey was anxious to be included in the defence plans, her exclusion from these schemes, along with the escalation of tension in international relations, increased Turkish feelings of insecurity.

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Therefore, during most of the year 1948, her failure to secure additional American security guarantees led Turkey to turn to Britain in October of the same year, as it was the only country which could induce the Americans to bind themselves more firmly to assist Turkey in the event of a global war. Turkey thought that the likelihood of obtaining British help for this purpose was closely linked to Turkey's collaboration with Britain in Middle Eastern affairs. While Turkey rendered all her help to Britain in its problems in the Middle East she received less from this collaboration, except some political and moral support, as Ankara pushed London to reaffirm the validity of the Anglo-Turkish alliance against possible foreign aggression.

In this period, as Turkey was increasingly involved in the Palestine question she began to play a significant role in Britain's Palestine policy, especially through her membership in the Conciliation Commission, for which Britain was not selected, in late 1948. Britain attributed great importance to Turkey's selection of the Palestine Conciliation Commission, which was set up for the purpose of solving the disputes between the Arabs and the Jews. There was however no unity among the Western powers on the Palestine issue. Although Britain and Turkey had fully agreed on the Palestine policy the Anglo-American rift on this issue was to continue until early 1949. From this time onwards, however, Britain and Turkey, by recognising the state of Israel, began to modify their Palestine towards becoming closer to the US policy.

The Western position in the Middle East was, however, seriously undermined with the hasty recognition of Israel by Britain and Turkey in early 1949. Under these circumstances, Britain thought that she would only recover its position in the region if the Palestine Conciliation Commission could find some sort of solution to the Arab-Jewish problems. This Commission, however, failed to realise its objectives even to a limited extent due to the strong Arab-Israeli opposition to the commission's suggestions.

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