

# Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Middle East in the 1950's and Its Impact On Turco-Arab Relations\*

## 1950'li Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu Politikası ve Bu Politikanın Türk-Arap Münasebetlerine Etkisi

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### Abstract

*Turkey's Middle Eastern policy was inaugurated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk whose policy reached its zenith with the establishment of the Pact of Sadabad in 1937. Thereafter this political activism in the Middle East was abandoned by forthcoming Turkish leader, President İnönü. İnönü adopted a rather passive policy in the regional affairs in order to follow a balanced policy between Arabs and Jews for geopolitical reasons. When Democrat party came to power in 1950 they re-embarked Turkey's engagement in the Middle Eastern politics. Their idea was to set up a kind of Arab-NATO under Turkey's leadership. Their idea was first to revive and develop the Sadabad Pact with which their efforts convert this pact into the Baghdad Pact in 1955. Then their second aim was to secure Western especially American security and economic aid. Apart from security imperatives, they believed that their political activism against to the spread of communism in the Middle East could result western involvement in the regional affairs and hence could result for more economic aid. Though Turkey to a greater extend obtained their economic and political objectives vis a vis the West their policies with the Arab states resulted in a failure. This was because there were fundamental differences in the interests of Turkey and the Arab states.*

*This article is based on abundant archival documents available in Turkey and abroad. It also consulted the available existing literature.*

**Keywords:** Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Adnan Menderes, Democrat Party, USA, Turkey, Britain, Iraq, Egypt, Middle East, NATO, Baghdad Pact.

### Öz

*Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tarafından yön verilen Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu politikası 1937 yılında kurulan Sadabad Paktiyle zirvesine ulaşmıştır. Daha sonra Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu'da takip etmiş olduğu aktif dış politikası Cumhurbaşkanı İnönü döneminde rafa kaldırılmıştır. İnönü dönemin kojektürü gereği ve de Arap ve Yahudiler arasında bir denge siyaseti takip edebilmek için bölge siyasetlerinden mümkün olduğunca uzak kalmayı tercih etmiştir. Ancak Demokrat Parti'nin 1950 yılında iktidara gelmesiyle bu durum değişmiş ve Başbakan Menderes Ortadoğu'da aktif bir politika takip etmeye başlamıştır. Menderes'in nihai amacı*

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*Görüş*

Akademik  
Bakış

245

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017

*Türkiye'nin liderliğinde bir Arap NATO'su oluşturmak. Bunu için de iki temel sebebi vardı. Birinci sebep Sadabad Paktı'nı aktif hale getirmek ve Türkiye'nin politik güç ve nüfuzunu arttırmak. İkinci sebep ise Batı'dan özellikle de ABD'den güvenlik takviyesi ve ekonomik yardım almaktır. Çünkü Demokrat Parti yöneticileri Türkiye'nin, komünizmin yayılmasını önlemeye yönelik olarak Ortadoğu'da siyasi olarak etkili olması halinde bu hedeflerin gerçekleşeceğini düşünmüşlerdi.*

*Ancak bu hedef Türk ve Arap devletlerin siyasi ve stratejik amaçlarının farklı olması yüzünden gerçekleşmedi. Bu makale arşiv belgelerine dayalı olarak hazırlanmış olup metinde mevcut ikinci el kaynaklardan da istifade edilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Adnan Menderes, Demokrat Parti, ABD, Türkiye, İngiltere, Irak, Mısır, Ortadoğu, Bağdat Paktı

## Introduction

From its establishment in 1923 until the present, the general trend of Turkish foreign policy has always been designed to make Turkey a full, equal member of the Western Nations. In order to achieve this main goal, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal, focused on an intensive reform package program to westernise Turkish Society while he followed an active foreign policy both in the East and the West. In the East, with the establishment of the Pact of Saadabad (or Sadabad) under the leadership of Turkey in 1937 she began to be regarded as the leader of the Eastern nations.<sup>1</sup> In the West, Turkey concluded Anglo-Franco-Turco alliance of 1939 in which Atatürk had taken crucial steps towards the formation of the treaty since the beginning of 1930's. This active policy was however abandoned with İsmet İnönü, after Atatürk's death in 1938, up until the end of the Second World War as Turkey remained neutral during the war. During this time, Turkey showed minimal interest in the Middle East politics.<sup>2</sup>

However, the beginning of the 1950's signalled a major change both in Turkey's internal and external policies. With the political elections in 1950, Turkey inaugurated a new era of multi party politics. This was, as historians have agreed on, a political revolution in Turkey. The coming to power of the new Democrat Party (DP) brought some significant changes in its implementation of Turkish Foreign Policy. The Democrats launched an intensive campaign in order to associate Turkey with the Western camp against the Soviet threat. They succeeded in achieving Turkey's entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952. Simultaneously, the leaders of the Democrat Party, by modifying their predecessor's foreign policy, heavily engaged in Middle Eastern politics.

1 British Legation, Tehran to Anthony Eden, 22 January 1938, FO 371/21836; Foreign Office to Iraq, 29 November 1939, FO 371/23194.

2 For detailed information on this see, Mustafa Bilgin, Britain and Turkey in the Middle East: Politics and Influence in the Early Cold War Era (London & New York: IB Tauris, 2008), pp.11-41.

This paper identifies a linkage between Turkey's goal to reinforce its international position and the revival of Turkish interests in the Middle East region and analyses the Turkish role in the establishment of the regional defence pact, the Baghdad pact of 1955. Another crucial reason for Turkey's involvement in the regional politics was to manage in joining in the Western defence organisation. More to the point this article also shows that DP's political activism in the Middle East was a continuation of Atatürk's foreign policy in the East. There were however some political and tactical differences between the two periods. What the Democrat Party leaders did was they widely extended Turkey's engagement in the Middle East however without taking into account of Arab states' interests and so that this policy in the end did not bring much fruits.

The last part of the paper deals with the reasons for the failures of the pact and its negative impacts on Turkish-Arab relations. This research has been done depending on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consulted are some of the British documents available at the Public Record Office, London and the series of the published United States documents called as FRUS.

### **Turkey's Entry into NATO: Gaining Membership and Its Outcomes**

After Atatürk's death, his right-hand man, İsmet İnönü came to power as the second president of Turkey, and became also the chairman of the ruling party, the Republican People's Party. As mentioned before İnönü tried to follow a neutral foreign policy. A prominent Turkish historian, Selim Deringil, described Turkish foreign policy in the years between 1939-1945 as 'active neutrality'.<sup>3</sup> Turkey signed a friendship agreement with Britain and France in 1939 and a non aggression treaty with Germany in 1941. At the end of the Second World War Turkey sided with the Allied powers by declaring war against Germany and Japan in order to ensure her admission to the United Nations. However, Turkey's neutral policy during the war, left her vulnerable to Soviet territorial and ideological expansion.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet Union denounced its friendship and non aggression pact of 1925 which was due for renewal with Turkey in 1945<sup>5</sup>. It also demanded the following from Turkey as compensation for the restoration of peaceful

3 Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.,135-140.

4 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "14. Bölüm: 1946-1950 Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası", *Osmanlı'dan İki-binli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya, Hüsnü Kapu, (ed.), (Ankara: Savaş Yayınevi, 2009), p. 351.

5 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Batı ile İlişkiler (1950-1960)", *Türk Dış Politikası 1919-2008*, Haydar Çakmak, (ed.), (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2008), p.437.

Gazi

Akademik  
Bakış

247

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017

relations<sup>6</sup>: 1) return of Kars, Ardahan which are the eastern parts of Turkey to the Soviet Union; 2) revision of the Montreux Straits Convention of 1936 which had ended international control of the Straits established in 1923; 3) granting a military base in the Dardanelles. The Soviet Union also accused Turkey of assisting Germany during the Second World War against her. Turkey officially rejected the Russian charges and demands, but she was afraid that she would be alone against Soviet pressure.<sup>7</sup> As a reaction to the Russian pressure, Turkey asked immediate protection from Britain under the 1939 treaty of mutual assistance. Though the British Foreign Office initially thought that Turkey badly behaved during the war it later swiftly recognised the importance of Turkey as Turkey was seen the last bulwark in front of the USSR's (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expansion towards the Middle East where Britain's vital interest had long existed.<sup>8</sup> In fact, at that time, Britain did not have adequate economic and military resources to assist Turkey alone against the Soviets. Therefore, Britain along with Turkey turned the United States (US) in order to obtain its support.<sup>9</sup>

The United States initially did not pay much attention to the Turkish-Russian dispute. At this time, Turkey was not important for US interests. But, soon after Soviet expansionist intentions became clear, and this caused a major threat to the West then, the President of the US recognised the necessity for Turkey's protection. At this time Soviet Russia launched an expansionist policy towards Eastern Europe and to the warm seas to the South. This sowed the seeds of the Cold War in international relations. Thus, The United States re-evaluated her policy towards Turkey. As George Harris summarized the US policy; 'to the US Government, the rationale for providing aid was couched in security terms: American interests in the eastern Mediterranean would suffer if Turkey should fall'.<sup>10</sup>

Turkey, which demanded full support from the West against her northern historical enemy, needed also a great amount of economic aid to modernise her economy which had been seriously affected by the Second World War. Washington tried to implement a containment policy and secure the Western oil interests in the Middle East in accordance with its global policy. Therefore, it attached high importance to Turkey during this period. This was because, the large number of Turkish army, and Turkey's unique position in the region blocking the way of the USSR, would provide military and strategic advantages to the US to contain the possible Soviet expansion towards the

6 For requests of the Soviet Union, see Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Sovyet Talepleri (Stalin) Krizi", *Türk Dış Politikasında 41 Kriz*, Haydar Çakmak, (ed.), (Ankara: Kripto, 2012), pp. 57-70.

7 Foreign Office Report on Turkey, 24 July 1946, FO 371/59316.

8 Chiefs of Staff (COS) (45) 459 (0), Offices of the Cabinet and Minister of Defence, 12 July 1945, FO 371/18699; Minute by Fitzmaurice, 30 October 1945, FO 371/48765.

9 Foreign Office to Peterson, İstanbul, 25 July 1945, FO 195/2487/401.

10 George Harris, *Troubled Alliance* (Washington DC: AEI-Hoover Institute, 1972), pp.,28.

Middle East. Eventually, the Soviet Union's efforts to enforce its will on Turkey and bring her in a satellite position provoked an American response to take up the British burden to defend Turkish sovereignty.<sup>11</sup>

On 21 October 1946, a memorandum by the Division of Near Eastern Affairs concluded that the United States (US) should assist Turkey diplomatically, economically, and militarily. Diplomatically, the Washington Government should maintain a firm political stance against the Soviet demands on Turkey. Morally, the US Government should make clear to the American people Turkey's situation and explain its policy. At the same time, the Washington should consider the possibility of both economic and military assistance.<sup>12</sup> Finally, President Truman announced an aid program and full support of the Washington to Turkey and Greece against the Soviet threat on 12 March, 1947.<sup>13</sup> The announcement of the Truman Doctrine indicated the beginning of a new era in American-Turkish relations. Thereafter, Turkey came increasingly under the influence of the United States. This influence resulted in changes both to Turkish domestic and foreign policies. Turkey gradually changed her foreign policy direction from passive towards a more active one.

These new changes of the foreign policy and new external factors led to new internal changes. In order to provide a full a co-operation with Western World there was a need for the introduction of multi party democracy. This in turn led to further softening of hard line Kemalism; religious education was reintroduced to Turkish schools in early 1949 and the Faculty of Theology was opened in October of the same year and so on. Though the West was very sceptical of the Republican's commitment to the multi party system and liberal economy, the Republican Government worked very hard to convince the West especially Americans, that they were sincere in their pro-western policy.

With the Truman Doctrine, Turkey obtained a partial guarantee and military aid from the United States. However, it left a number of unresolved questions. For instance, the duration of US aid was not clarified. In 1949, The American Government made clear that multiyear military commitment was not possible, unless Turkey became a member of NATO. In spite of all her efforts to keep in line with the West, Turkey was left out from the Nato Treaty signed in 1949. Soon Turkey attained information that major opposition came from the European members of NATO, but not from the Americans, especially, from the British and Scandinavians sides. These states feared that the extension of the pact to unindustrialized and Muslim Turkey would weaken the unity of the European community'.<sup>14</sup>

11 *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*), 1946, (Washington, 1969), Vol. VII, pp.857-858.

12 *FRUS*, Vol.VII, pp.,847-848.

13 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Post-war American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), pp.18-25.

14 Harris, *Troubled Alliance*, pp.,38-39.

Gazi

Akademik  
Bakış

249

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017

At the beginning of 1950, there was a major change in Turkey's domestic politics. The most important one was the change of the government, with the new coming Democrat Party. This new government was warmly welcomed by Washington, and the party was more enthusiastic about associating Turkey with NATO than the former government. After a month, when the new Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, took office, the Korean War broke out. The Menderes Government announced its decision to send a 4500-man unit to join the US troops in Korea.<sup>15</sup> This was the most convincing point that opened the gates of NATO.<sup>16</sup> Eventually, Turkey entered NATO on 18 February 1952 as a full fledged member.

Turkey's leaders had already linked their efforts towards full collaboration with the West with Turkey's policies in the Middle East. Turkey cast its votes not with the Arabs but with the Western powers, in the United Nations General Assembly for the creation of the Palestine Conciliation Commission and took part in it with France and the US in 1948. Whereas the previous year Turkey voted alongside the Arab Countries for an independent Palestine by opposing the UN resolution taken in 1947 which partitioned Palestine between Jews and Arabs.<sup>17</sup> This Turkey's alliance with the West against the Palestinian wishes was resented by the Arab states. Another Turkish political move, which was deeply begrudged by the Arab states, was her recognition of the state of Israel in 1949.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the new direction of Turkish policy which pursued much closer co-operation with the West against the Soviet threat would obviously clash with the policies of the Arab states. The Arab States had a very different attitude. They did not pay much attention to the Soviet expansionism. Their policy focused on the Palestine crisis which led to the establishment of Israel in 1948. At the same time the Arab States, Egypt, in particular, were busy to remove Britain's political and military domination from the region.

During this period Britain was the dominant power in the Middle East. It had effective control of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. It had crucial economic, strategic, and political interests in these areas. Economically, Britain needed the oil of the region. Strategically, the Suez Canal zone was the most significant base to Britain as it provided the British access to the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. However, the war weakened severely the British economy and as a result Britain asked from the US to support

15 Ankara to Foreign Office, 6 July 1950, Political Summary, no.10, FO 371/87935.

16 İstanbul to Foreign Office, 30 July 1950, FO 371/87948.

17 İsmail Soysal,(ed.), *idem*, 'Turkish-Arab Diplomatic Relations after the Second World War (1945-1986)', *Studies on Turkish Arab Relations Annual-1986* pp.,252.

18 Michael B. Bishku, 'Turkey and its Middle Eastern Neighbours since 1945', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.15, No.3, Spring 1992, pp.,60-61.

itself in the region against the Soviet threat. Pentagon talks between British and American officials in 1947 confirmed that Britain would continue to be responsible for protecting Western interests in the region for the foreseeable future, and Washington would assist Britain economically, and politically in the pursuit of these interests.<sup>19</sup>

### **Anglo-Turkish Relations in the Middle East in the 1951-1953 Period**

Throughout the early post-war period, regional defence for the Middle East was an objective of British policy, especially with the perception of the Soviet Union as the major threat to the region. There was also a challenge to British domination within the region itself. After gaining their independence, the Arab States were increasingly dissatisfied with the British policies in the Middle East and their dissatisfaction prevented the renewal of the treaties between Britain and Egypt and Iraq which guaranteed the former's military presence in those countries. Arab nationalism had grown considerably during the Second World War and was further strengthened by the Arab defeat in Palestine. The Arabs blamed the British for the creation of Israel.<sup>20</sup> The public discontent of Western domination was spreading fast. In fact, this Arab challenge coincided with the Soviet confrontation with the West. This helped to ensure American support for the United Kingdom in the region. Nevertheless, the general responsibility for the defence of the Middle East remained in British hands, and this was acknowledged by the leader of the Western block namely the United States.

The bases at Suez were the cornerstone of the British defence plans. However, the new Egyptian Government commenced a campaign for removal of British presence from Suez in the beginning of 1950. Towards the end of the following year the King of Egypt declared that his government would unilaterally abrogate the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936, which provided Britain to occupy the Canal Zone. The British Foreign Secretary responded that the United Kingdom would not agree to 'any measures which would leave the Middle East defenceless'.<sup>21</sup> During this time, Turkey was struggling to enter into NATO as a full fledged member.

However, the main opposition to Turkish adherence into NATO came from the United Kingdom. This was because Britain preferred to allocate a place for Turkey in a separate Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO).

19 *FRUS*, 1947 Vol.V, The Near East and Africa, pp.,614-623.

20 Minute by Charge 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 R. Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948-56* (London, 1990), pp.32-35.

21 Bulent, Ali Riza 'Turkish Participation in Middle East Defence Projects and its Impact on Turco-Arab Relations, May 1950-June 1953' (Unpublished Ph.D.Dissertation, St.Antony's College, Univ. of Oxford, 1982),pp.,47.

*gazi*

Akademik  
Bakış

251

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017



Eventually, the British government presented a 'package deal' in which it asked a compromise with Turkey in July 1951. According to the compromise Turkey was allowed to join NATO, while she should assist Britain in a Western defence initiative in the Middle East.<sup>22</sup>

In October 1951, Britain promoted the first post-war defence project, the Middle East Command, (MEC), which planned to defend the region against possible Soviet expansion. More significantly, the plan aimed to allow renewal of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty under this multilateral command. This plan was presented to Egypt on 6 October with the participation of Turkey, the US, Britain and France. However, the Egyptians and other Arab states regarded the Command as simply another way of subjugation to Western hegemony and refused to join it. In the absence of the Arab support, the Command became abortive.<sup>23</sup> The second attempt for regional defence planning was initiated by the US and UK in June 1952 and this time they modified its name as the Middle East Defence Organisation. Turkey also supported this second undertaking. However this attempt also failed because there was no Arab support for the scheme<sup>24</sup>.

Consequently, owing largely to Egyptian opposition to the abortive British defence plans, six months later, another move was initiated by the US secretary of State, John Foster Dulles for a new collective defence plan called as the 'Northern Tier' project. This plan was based on the voluntary participation of pro-western Middle East countries bordering the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Change of Turkey's Reliance from Britain to the United States**

The beginning of the year of 1953 signalled some significant changes in international politics. With Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, the relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey took a new direction. The new Soviet leaders offered a new treaty of friendship which they had revoked in 1945, and economic assistance. They also abandoned their claims on the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan. However, the Democrat leaders in Turkey remained cautious and they were convinced that this was a tactical Soviet move. They believed that Moscow's policy was to make an attractive offer and later withdraw it in an attempt to dominate Turkish politics.<sup>26</sup>

The other change was the coming to power of the new Eisenhower administration in the US. This new government which took office in 1953

22 *FRUS*, 1951, Vol.III, part 1, (Washington DC, 1981), pp., 555-558.

23 *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol IX, part 1, The Near East and Middle East, pp., 226-228.

24 *Ibid*, pp., 363-64, 371-72.

25 *Ibid*, pp., 2, 384.

26 Sir Oliver Harvey, Paris, to Foreign Office, 4 June 1953, PREM 11/568; Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy Toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence*, (New York, 1982), pp., 14-15.



undertook a comprehensive survey of Middle Eastern policy where little progress had been made in setting up of a sufficient security system. In order to realize this new policy, the new secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, paid a visit to the key Middle Eastern and South Asian countries in the spring of 1953. Dulles and his group arrived in Turkey in May 1953, and met with Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. The Prime Minister explained Dulles that there was an urgent need to set up a new defence organisation in which Turkey should take a key role. He also stressed that Turkey's close location to the Soviet Union required Turkey to expend large amounts on her defence. He stated that Turkey needed US aid more than any other countries. At the end of the meeting Dulles agreed with Menderes that Turkey should be the anchor of any Middle Eastern defence plans.<sup>27</sup> Though Turkey officially endorsed the new American defence scheme she drew its own regional plan which eventually converged with the new American 'Northern Tier' defence scheme since the British defence efforts did not bring any success in the Middle East.

The first step was a treaty of friendship and co-operation signed on 3 April 1954, between Turkey and Pakistan, with which Dulles had conducted the military negotiations. With the Turco-Pakistani Pact Menderes government managed to take the first step towards a new defence organisation. The second step forward was towards Iraq. Initially Iraq was eager to join the pact as its Prime Minister Fadil Cemali informed Turkish ambassador to Iraq that he wished to join the pact. However, the internal situation in Iraq was not yet ripe for any advance towards the above mentioned pact. In Iraq, there was a strong radical nationalist and left wing opposition to any western defence initiatives. Moreover, other Arab states, particularly Egypt strongly opposed to all kinds of defence arrangements with non Arab states. This made Iraq hesitant to accept the Turkish invitation. The Arabs generally believed that the real threat came from Israel and they did not pay much attention to the possible Soviet expansion. Furthermore, the Palestinian Question continued to remain as the main focus in Arab politics.<sup>28</sup>

However, there seemed more favourable circumstances for the collective defence organisation in the Middle East in August 1954. The long Anglo-Egyptian dispute on the Suez Canal base which had always been a major obstacle to the Western defence plans was solved on the line that Britain should evacuate the base within two years. In Iraq, the previous Prime Minister, Fadil Jamali, resigned on 19 April 1954 and the new veteran pro British Iraqi politician Nuri al Said came to power. Nuri had long advocated close co-operation with the West, and with Britain, in particular. These

27 *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol IX, part1, pp.,139-141-142.

28 *FRUS*, *ibid.*,pp.,486-87,503,554-55; See also, Robert A. Fernea and Wm, Roger Louis (ed.) *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958*, (London, NewYork: 1991),pp.,4,41,43,70.

*Gazi*

Akademik  
Bakış

253

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017

recent developments increased Menderes' hope that he could convince both the Egyptian and Iraqi governments to join the defence pact. Although Iraq signalled a positive response towards the pact, the Egyptian president, Jamal Abdel Nasser, strongly opposed it, believing that it was a western tactic that planned to perpetuate their hegemony in the Middle East.<sup>29</sup>

Eventually, after long efforts and endeavours Menderes and Nuri came to an agreement and signed the Turco-Iraqi pact, the so-called Baghdad Pact, on 24 February 1955. Within the same year Britain, Pakistan and Iran joined the Pact. The five members of the pact established a formal organisation in Baghdad and set up there a permanent headquarters in November 1955. The United States however declined to enter into the pact. Probably, its reluctance was based on its concerns about the Egyptian reaction and the efforts of the pro-Israeli lobby against the pact.<sup>30</sup> Inclusion of Iraq in the pact alienated the Arabs especially Egypt from the West as being favour of the Soviets.

Turkey's involvement in Middle Eastern politics culminated with the formation of the Baghdad Pact. The main motivations which drove deeply the Democrat Government into the regional politics can be grouped as follows: first, the Democrat's had long attempts to prove their loyalty and willingness to co-operate with their western allies; second, with the pact, Turkey planned to secure its eastern and south eastern borders from a direct or indirect communist threat; third, in the mind of the Democrats, the establishment of a pact would be a good asset to obtain more economic aid from the West.

During this time, the Menderes Government needed Western, especially American aid more than at any other time. The main goal of Menderes was to manage rapid development of the Turkish industry and expansion of its economy at any cost. Only in this way he believed in 'complete independence' of the country could be achieved. The realisation of Turkey's objectives was based largely on American aid. However, the designers of the US aid program in Turkey concentrated on the development of Turkey's agriculture but not on her industry. Sixty per cent of the US aid which totalled 300 million dollars between 1948 and 1952, had been invested on the agricultural sector.

Thus, there occurred sharp differences between the two governments with regard to Turkey's industrial development. The United States granted aid mostly for defence purposes and agricultural developments, while the Democrat Party insisted upon the industrialisation of the Country. This led Washington to refuse to extend the aid package in 1954 and 1957. Eventually, Menderes had to take the IMF (International Monetary Fund) program in order

29 Bilgin, *Britain and Turkey in the Middle East*, pp. 182-215; Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy*, pp.,162,165.

30 George Mc Ghee, *The US Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection* (London, 1990), pp.,157.

to ease economic hardships. This was because the government's economic policies caused high inflation and trade deficits that brought Turkey's economy to the verge of bankruptcy in 1955. Thus, the primary motivation which drove Menderes government into regional politics was not only for the sake of strengthening relations with regional states but also it was as a result of Turkish attempts to prove itself to the West as a co-operative partner in regional affairs in order to receive more western aid.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Reasons for the Failure of the Baghdad Pact and Its Impact on Turco-Arab Relations**

During the period between 1954 and 1958 the primary aim of the Democrat government was to expand the pact in the Middle East as much as possible. It believed that the enlargement of the pact might enable them to squeeze more economic and military assistance from the West.<sup>32</sup> However, their plans failed because of the strong Arab opposition to the pact. The major opposition to the pact came from Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian President, who was prompting Arab nationalism and assuming the role of leader of the Arab World. Moreover, there had been a long competition between Iraq and Egypt for the leadership of the Arab World. The existence of the Baghdad pact intensified this rivalry.

The Turkish-Iraqi alliance left Egypt in a mood of isolation and the latter feared that if other Arab states joined the pact this would increase Iraq's influence within the Arab World hence weakening Egypt's position. For this reason Egypt embarked on a campaign to force Iraq to withdraw from the pact. Even though Nasser failed to dissuade Iraq, he had an immense negative effect on the regional countries like Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> In order to extend the pact, the most convenient candidate for Turkey was pro-British Jordanian government. Turkish President Celal Bayar paid a visit to Amman in order to attain Jordanian adherence to the pact. However, after hostile Egyptian propaganda the popular uprisings in the streets of Amman forced this country to side with Egypt and even the pro-British Jordanian government was forced to resign.<sup>34</sup> These events broke Murderess's efforts to expand the pact among the Arab states.

In the following months, the Suez and Syrian Crisis brought about a further deterioration in Turco-Arab relations. In 1956, the nationalisation of the Suez Canal opened the way for the Suez War. In collaboration with France and Israel, Britain took action against nationalisation and attacked Egypt. This

31 Harris, *Troubled Alliance*, pp.,32-34, 71-73.

32 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "11 Eylül Sonrası Türk Dış Politikasında Vizyon Arayışları ve "Dört Tarzı Siyaset"", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, Cilt 1, Sayı 1, Kış 2007, p. 47.

33 Ismail Soysal, "1955 Bagdat Pakti" *Bellekten*, c.55, sayı 212, (Ankara Nisan, 1991), pp.,208,209.

34 Hüseyin Bağcı, *Demokrat Parti Dönemi Dış Politikası*, (Ankara, 1990), pp.,73-74.

was a great blow to the Baghdad Pact and became one of the main reasons for the collapse of the pact. Eventually, the British and French move ended in a fiasco and increased Nasser's prestige in the Arab World. Turkey along with the other members condemned the attack and declared its support for the Arabs. Furthermore, Turkey withdrew its Ambassador to Tel Aviv.

However, the Turkish actions did not satisfy the Arabs. The Syrian Crisis of 1957 emerged as a result of Turkish reaction to close relations between Syria and the Soviet Union. The expulsion of a number of American diplomats from Syria and the appointment of a communist sympathiser to the most senior position in the Syrian army resulted in serious concerns in Turkey about the possibility of Syria turning into a Soviet satellite. Menderes reacted to this by massing troops on the Syrian border. However, Washington warned Ankara not to intervene in Syria.<sup>35</sup> The deployment of Turkish troops created a great resentment in Syria. Eventually, the crisis<sup>36</sup> did not cause an open military conflict and calmed down.

After these crises had passed, a major devastating blow to the pact came with the Iraqi revolution of 1958. This was a revolt of young officers led by Brigadier Abdelkerim Quasim. The revolution received great support from the Iraqi people and became a truly popular revolution. The revolution overthrew local elites including the King and his veteran Prime Minister Nuri al Said and eliminated foreign influence. This also resulted in the collapse of the Baghdad pact for which the West had worked for 10 years to set up. Iraq officially abandoned the pact on 24 March 1959. The Iraqi revolution also opened the gate to other coups and revolutions such as in Pakistan in 1958, in Turkey in 1960. The coup was a great shock to Menderes. He worked hard for five years to build the pact. He was seriously considered to intervene and restore the old regime. The Turkish government asserted that the revolution was inspired by Nasser and the communists. However, the Menderes government was unable to get western support to interfere in Iraq and reluctantly recognized the new regime.<sup>37</sup>

According to the argument which has been presented thus far, the reasons for the failure of the Western defence initiatives can be grouped as follows: a) It was a clear mistake to organise a defence organisation by the West at a time when Arab Nationalism was at its height and committed to the removal of Western hegemony; b) the Arab states believed that the real threat came from Israel which had been backed by the West but not from the USSR;

35 *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol XIII, Near East: Jordan, Yemen, pp.,692-93 see also, Ömer E. Kürkcüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arab Orta Doğusuna Karşı Politikası, 1945-70* (Ankara 1972),pp.,101-111.

36 For NATO crisis management, see Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "NATO ve Kriz Yönetimi", *Krizler ve Kriz Yönetimi*, Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Ertan Efeğil, (ed.), (Ankara: Barış Kitap, 2012), pp. 347-369.

37 Bağcı, *Demokrat Parti Dönemi Dış Politikası*, pp.,96-99.

c) Turkey, in reality, had no experience about the nature of the post-war Middle Eastern politics and until the 1950's she remained, in general, indifferent towards the Arabs. Thus, the Menderes government underestimated the role of Arab Nationalism and overestimated Turkey's influence to convince the Arabs to join to the pact; d) finally, the inclusion of Britain in the pact and its attack on Egypt during the Suez war was one of the major blows for the pact and it resulted in a great popular discontent against the West.

The active Turkish role in Western defence organisations became extremely unpopular in many parts of the Arab world. In Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan there were popular demonstrations against the Baghdad pact in general, and Turkey, in particular. There was a strong Arab criticism of Turkey, claiming that Turkey was defending imperialists' interests in the region. The Egyptian press intensified its campaign in the same manner against Turkey. The Egyptian Radio, denounced Turkey acting as an agent of the West. It also announced that the Baghdad pact was a link in the imperialist chain.<sup>38</sup> The Syrian, Suez and Iraqi crises further increased the tension between Turks and Arabs.

With the establishment of the Baghdad pact, after a period of coolness between each other, the Menderes government hoped that the Turks and the Arabs could come to a compromise and improve their relations. However, Turkey's long efforts to co-operate with the Arabs did not provide any improvement in their relations but increased the existing tension between them.

## Conclusion

To sum up the arguments so far, it appears that in the 1950's, after the coming of the Democrat Party to power, signalled both changes in Turkey's internal and external policies. The Democrats' involvement in Middle Eastern politics in the 1950's was a clear sign of the new orientation of Turkish Foreign policy. This was for the first time, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, that the Turks began to show a keen interest in Middle Eastern politics. The Democrat government's involvement in regional politics came out as a result of its attempts to reinforce her international position and to prove itself to the West as a co-operative partner in regional affairs.

There were two main reasons for these attempts; the first one was security. Turkey sought a firm security guarantee, when she was faced with a clear Soviet threat that lasted till 1953. The second one was economic. The Prime minister, Adnan Menderes, was zealous to manage rapid industrialisation of the country. This was the most important reason, which had deeply driven the

38 Bülent, Ali Rıza, 'Turkish Participation in the Middle East Defence Projects', pp, 106-107.

*Gazi*

Akademik  
Bakış

257

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017

Democrats into the Middle Eastern politics on behalf of the West, even though the Soviets abandoned their demands and offered Turkey economic assistance after 1953. The main aim of the Democrats was to get more Western, especially US, aid in return for Turkey's assistance in the Western defence organisations.

As a result, Turkey's hard work to bring all Arab states into the Baghdad Pact brought no success. This was because Turkish policies contradicted with the Arab political interests as occurred in the case of Turkey's relations with the West and Israel. The Turkish and Western underestimation of the power of Arab nationalism in Middle Eastern politics was one of the major mistakes which eventually resulted in the collapse of the Pact.

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Gazi

Akademik  
Bakış

259

Cilt 11  
Sayı 21  
Kış 2017