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REFLECTIONS OF TURKEY'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY ON THE PRESS IN THE 1950s

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Abstract

Democrat Party (DP) era is one of the contested periods in terms of politics, economy, society and foreign policy in Turkey. Particularly, the government-press relations and Turkey's Middle East policy especially in the late 1950s consist serious challenges and crises. Initially, the DP government conducted a liberal press policy, but in the second half of the decade government-press relations strained. Similarly, Turkey's Middle East policy can be regarded as a success story in the first half of the decade, while Turkey faced serious crises and challenges in the region in the second half. Despite several studies on government-press relations in the 1950s in the literature, there is a shortage of specific studies analyzing positions of the press towards DP's Middle East policy. As a result, this paper aims to fill this gap and analyze the positions of the press regarding Turkey's Middle East policy throughout the decade in order to show divergence and convergence between the government and the press. Selected newspapers and journals published in this period will be used as primary sources. This paper concludes that the press in Turkey, regardless of their positions towards the government, supported DP's pro-Western and anti-communist Middle East policy despite some exceptions.

Keywords: Press, Democrat Party, Cold War, Middle East, 1950s.

1950'Lİ YILLARDA TÜRKİYE'NİN ORTADOĞU POLİTİKASININ BASINDAKİ YANSIMALARI

Öz

Demokrat Parti (DP) dönemi siyaset, ekonomi, toplum ve dış politika alanlarında en çok tartışılan dönemlerden biridir. Bu dönemde özellikle hükümet-basın ilişkilerinde ve Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu politikasında önemli krizler ve meydan okumalarla karşılaşmıştır. 1950'li yılların başından itibaren görece liberal bir basın politikası uygulayan DP hükümeti, on yılın ikinci yarısında daha baskıcı bir politika izlemiştir. Benzer şekilde on yılın ilk

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yarısında görece başarılı bir Ortadoğu siyaseti güden hükümet, dönemin ikinci yarısında bölgede önemli krizler ve meydan okumalarla karşılaşmıştır. Literatürde bu dönemdeki hükümet-basın ilişkileri üzerine çalışmalar bulunsa da Ortadoğu siyaseti özelinde basın inceleyen bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, basının Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu politikası ile ilgili duruşunu analiz ederek hükümet ve basın arasındaki gelgitleri ortaya koymaktır. Seçili gazete ve dergiler çalışmanın birincil kaynaklarını oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmada ulaşılan sonuç basının hükümete karşı duruşu ne olursa olsun DP'nin Batı yanlısı ve komünizm karşıtı Ortadoğu politikasını bazı istisnai durumlara rağmen desteklemiş olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Basın, Demokrat Parti, Soğuk Savaş, Ortadoğu, 1950'ler.*

INTRODUCTION

After Turkey's transition to a multi-party regime in 1945, the DP came to power with an overall majority in 1950. The 1954 election marked both the height of the DP's power and the beginning of its decline and relations between the government and opposition, i.e. parties in the parliament and the press, were full of tension in the second half of the 1950s. (Eroğul, 2003, p. 159-251; Aydemir, 2007, p. 232-421; Zürcher, 2013, p. 323-341)

In Turkey's transition to democracy between 1946 and 1950, the majority of the press supported the DP as the main opposition party. Furthermore, the press is regarded as one of the factors in the DP's election victory in 1950. (Yıldız, 1996, p. 482-486; Çakır ve Yavalar, 2017, p. 258-260) As a response to the press support, the oppressive single party era Press Law was liberalized on July 15, 1950 after the DP had come to power. The new law no. 5680 limited the government's jurisdiction over the press and removed the requirement for government approval to publish new journals and newspapers. In addition, members of the press were no longer to be tried in extraordinary courts. (Deniz, 2019, p. 115-160; Topuz, 2014, p. 192-209; Kabacalı, 2000, p. 213,216; Eroğul, 2003, p. 137-138, 192, 242; Yıldız, 1996, p. 487; Emre Kaya, 2011, p. 94-96) Press support to DP continued until the 1954 election victory of the party because the DP's relatively soft policies towards the press played a role in the smooth relations between the two sides.

Nevertheless, the 1954 election was a turning point in DP's history after which it faced several political and economic crises. The second half of the 1950s witnessed a split in the press to supporters vs opponents of the DP regime especially after 1954. As criticism towards the government increased, especially in regard to domestic politics, the government's reaction towards the opponents became more oppressive. (Yıldız, 1996, p. 492-496; Emre Kaya, 2011, p. 100-101) The Press Law was amended and journalists were sentenced to heavy penalties. Opponents of the DP in the press such as Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, a leading journalist in his 80s, and Metin Toker, editor of Akis journal and RPP leader İnönü's son-in-law, were arrested and jailed. In addition, opponent newspapers and journals were closed in

certain periods. (Koloğlu, 2015, p. 124; Toker, 1991a, p. 59, 93-98; Toker, 1991b, p. 194) More importantly, as newspapers were financially supported by the government via advertisements due to lack of private sponsors, this financial dependence jeopardized the freedom of the press and journalists. In these years of crises, the DP government supported newspapers and journals closer to the government and limited the financial resources of opponents. (Deniz, 2019, p. 115-160; Topuz, 2014, p. 192-209; Kabacalı, 2000, p. 213,216; Eroğul, 2003, p. 137-138, 192, 242; Koloğlu, 2015, p. 124-125; Yıldız, 1996, p. 496-498)

In this paper, positions in the press towards DP's Middle East policy will be analyzed under these circumstances by grouping newspapers and journals as supporters and opponents of the DP. Those such as *Zafer*, *Son Posta*, and *Cumhuriyet*¹ belong to the first group, while newspapers like *Ulus* and the journals *Akis* and *Forum*² belong to the latter. In addition, the decade will be divided into two periods: alliance projects in the Middle East (1950-1955) and crises in the Middle East (1955-1958).

¹ *Zafer* was the organ of the Democrat Party. It was published and edited by Mümtaz Faik Fenik, who wrote articles and supported the government's domestic and international policies. *Son Posta* was published by Selim Ragıp Emeç, who was also the editor. This newspaper supported and praised the policies of the government. *Cumhuriyet*, which was established by Yunus Nadi in the early years of the republican regime, supported the policies of the government towards the Middle East, but was not as uncritical as *Zafer* and *Son Posta*. Nadir Nadi, the editor of *Cumhuriyet*, and Ömer Sami Cosar wrote articles on Turkish foreign policy, particularly on developments in the Middle East and Turkey's position.

² *Ulus* was the official newspaper of the RPP and acted as its "spokesperson", particularly in domestic politics. In the second half of the 1950s, domestic politics witnessed several crises and *Ulus* supported the opposition and criticized the government. In foreign policy, *Ulus* took a pro-West and pro-status quo position that was in line with the leader of the RPP. Therefore, until the crises of 1958, *Ulus* cautiously supported government policy, but heavily criticized the government's Middle East policy during the crises of 1958. Ahmet Sükrü Esmer, the foreign policy writer of *Ulus*, focused on the developments rather than the policies of the government. *Akis* was similarly closely engaged with the RPP, especially after editor Metin Toker became former Prime Minister İnönü's son-in-law in 1955, and acted as his spokesperson. The articles in *Akis* were critical of government's Middle East policy especially in the years of crises. *Forum* was published between 1954 and 1970 and was a platform for the opposition against the Democrat Party's anti-democratic policies. The journal was in favor of Western type democracy and institutions and first published on April 1, 1954. *Forum* was in favor of Arab nationalism in the Middle East and proposed that Turkey should conduct closer and friendlier relations with neighboring Arab nations rather than forging ties with the Western powers to the disadvantage of the Arabs. Çakmak, *Forum Dergisi 1954-1960*, 93-96.

ALLIANCE PROJECTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST (1950-1955)

After Turkey gained membership to NATO, the DP government began to pursue an active policy in the Middle East with the support of the US and the aim of maximizing national interests defined by the decision makers. In this process, there were three major developments between 1950 and 1955: The Middle East Command (MEC) project, the pact between Turkey and Pakistan (1954), and the Baghdad Pact (1955). The MEC was the first project formulated by Western powers in the early 1950s to establish an alliance system in the Middle East against Soviet infiltration and expansion. In this project, Turkey and Egypt were to be the key players around which the system would be formed. (Yeşilbursa, 1999, p. 70-96; Oran, 2006, p. 620-621; Kürkçüođlu, 1972, p. 33-48) While negotiations were carried out between Western powers and key players in the region, the Free Officers Coup (1952) ended this process with the refusal of the MEC by the new Egyptian regime.

The press closely followed the developments and, in general, were in favor of the establishment of a defense system in the Middle East. *Zafer* supported Turkey's involvement in such a defense system in order to resolve the conflicts and tension in the region. The paper argued that Turkey should play an active role in the Middle East and implement policies for peace and security in the region in collaboration with the West. (Fenik, 1952) Similarly, articles in the *Son Posta* praised the proposal given to Egypt by the US, UK, France, and Turkey and criticized its rejection by the Egyptian government. According to the writer, the Middle East Command was a strong basis for the defense of the region against external threats. (Emeç, 1951) *Cumhuriyet* also emphasized the necessity of a defense system in the region and criticized Egypt's refusal to join the command and published articles arguing that Egypt was not in favor of joining the command as it wanted to maximize its interests in the region and resolve the Suez and Sudan Crises. The paper also argued that an alliance against the Soviet threat was nevertheless vital and the lack of such a defense system would serve Soviet interests. Moreover, the refusal of Egypt to join the command should not have terminated the project because Turkey, rather than Egypt, would be the keystone of the Command. (Daver, 1951)

The position of *Ulus* to the MEC project was supportive but reserved. The paper argued that while the establishment of a defense system in the Middle East was necessary, Turkey's membership in the MEC should not be a precondition of its NATO membership. Moreover, the paper asserted that the leadership of the UK was not appropriate for such a system and that Egypt's reaction proved the region's resentment against the UK. (Esmer, 18 October 1951) *Ulus* approached the project cautiously and published several articles on the issue. For example, in another article on the project, the writer insisted that Turkey should know its responsibilities and duties under the MEC and that the borders of the project should be drawn and the meaning of security clearly defined. Security was seen as the defense of the region against any Soviet threat. However, Turkey's image in the region was conflictual:

on the one hand, Turkey wanted to be a member of NATO to provide its security. On the other hand, Turkey faced conflicts with the Arab world because Arabs perceived Turkey as a supporter of the UK, which had mandated the region in the past. The author added that if the project caused the hostility of the Arabs, it should be abandoned. (Esmer, 23 October 1951)

Consequently, the press supported Turkey's involvement in a regional defense system but newspapers opposing the government placed some reservations on Turkey's membership to such a system, namely security, the country's role, and the reaction of Arabs. However, it can be argued that pro-Western and anti-communist stances of the government and the opposition in foreign policy impacted the press and that despite some questions and objection, there was a consensus in the Turkish press in favor of an alliance in the region against the Soviet Union.

After the failure of the MEC, the US changed its strategy in the Middle East. US Secretary of State John F. Dulles formulated the *Northern Tier* concept to form an alliance between Turkey and Iraq, two main actors in the region closer to the West. For the DP government, a regional alliance would protect Turkey's territorial integrity and sovereignty against the Soviet Union and would assure economic and military support from the US. (From the Ambassador of Pakistan in Turkey to Foreign Office - FO 371.130181. RK 10316-6) The pact between Turkey and Pakistan was signed on April 2, 1954 as the first step in the formation of a Middle East alliance. (Oran, 2006, p. 622; Kürkçüoğlu, 1972, p. 54)

Zafer, *Son Posta*, and *Cumhuriyet* supported the pact. According to the editor of *Cumhuriyet*, the treaty would link the two states and expand the Western defense system to the East. The basic feature of the agreement was the lack of any aggressive intention against any other state and its openness to all states. Therefore, the Turkish nation would support the treaty as a peace-loving nation. Furthermore, the pact would strengthen the security of Turkey as well as the security of the Middle East and of the whole world. It argued that such a pact could be regarded as a success of the Turkish government. (Nadi, 1954)

Similarly, the pact was supported by *(Yeni) Ulus*, which argued that relations between Turkey and Hindu Muslims or Pakistanis were everlasting and that, while the treaty would not be fruitful in the short run, it would be a starting point to bring peace and security to the region. (Yalçın, 1954) However, writer Ahmet Şükrü Esmer's position on the pact was skeptical. He stated that it would serve for the US military aid to Pakistan and bring nothing to Turkey, so Turkey could sign any treaty without being obliged to any movement outside its borders while it might serve to harmonize the policies of the parties as Turkey's only benefit. (Esmer, 1954) Despite some questions in the press, the pact between Turkey and Pakistan was formulated by Western powers in the early 1950s supported as the MEC due to the fear of communist expansion and the pro-Western orientation of Turkish foreign policy internalized by all the actors in the system.

The *Northern Tier* concept turned into an alliance with the signing of the Baghdad Pact on February 24, 1955 after long negotiations between Turkey and Iraq. Turkey pushed hard for the alliance as its role would serve as a bridge between the region and the West and would gain the country political, economic, and military support.³ (Sever, 1998, p. 74-80; Kürkçüoğlu, 1972, p. 55-82)

The majority of the press supported and presented the Baghdad Pact as a success story, with the exception of the journal *Forum*. *Zafer* praised the DP government and argued that the Pact was very significant for the DP as it served as an indicator of the alliance between Turkey and Iraq in the Middle East. Despite anti-pact propaganda from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iraq continued negotiations and signed the Pact, which *Zafer* claimed would strengthen the NATO defense in the Middle East. (Fenik, 1955) *Son Posta* also supported the Pact as a “diplomatic masterpiece” and praised the fact that despite the negative efforts of the Egyptian government, the Baghdad Pact was signed. The paper argued that the Pact was not against the Arab Union but was open to all the states in the region except those with aggressive intentions and that it would consolidate peace and stability in the region. (Emeç, 1955) Similarly, *Cumhuriyet* supported the Pact and criticized the reaction of the Arab states to it. The editor of the newspaper stated that the Pact would charge Turkey with the defense of the Arab world and the free world and as a result, Turkey would be politically and militarily responsible in the region, rendering inexplicable the negative reaction of the Arab world. The paper also argued that Egypt’s reaction, on the other hand, stemmed from its perception of Turkey as a threat to its leadership in the Arab world and the state would be against any collaboration between the Arab states and Turkey. (Nadi, 1955; Öngel, 2017, p. 50)

For *Akis*, the Baghdad Pact was similar to that between Turkey and Pakistan and contribute greatly to the West by saving the Arab Union and the Middle East from the pressure of Nasser’s Egypt. The paper harshly criticized Egypt’s policy and praised Iraq as a result of the agreement with Turkey. (“Arap birliği”, 1955) *Forum*, however, criticized the Baghdad Pact by saying that although Turkey was the “natural leader” of the Middle East, the Pact would provoke the Arabs and cause resentment and hostility against Turkey. According to the journal, the reactions to the Pact, arising out of the impact of Arab nationalism and Arab leaders’ rivalry for hegemony and prestige in the region, were not surprising and should have been anticipated. As a result, the Pact flamed hostility against Turkey in the region, particularly in Egypt and Syria. (“Türk-Irak paktının akisleri”, 1955)

All-in-all, it can be argued that the Turkish press predominantly supported the DP government and the alliance projects in the region, ending with the Baghdad Pact because these projects were compatible with Turkey’s priorities and *raison*

³ For more details of the Baghdad Pact see Yeşilbursa, *The Baghdad Pact*.

d'état as a pro-Western, anti-Soviet, and anti-communist country. However, as *Forum* correctly diagnosed, Turkey's priorities and the regional dynamics were not harmonious. Thanks to moderate relations between the government and the press as well as the lack of crises in the region, the press played a consent manufacturing role for the public as expected by the government. The financial dependence of the press on the government can be regarded as another factor in the support of the press despite some reservations. However, with the change of relations between the DP and the press in the second half of the decade and the eruption of crises threatening Turkey's position in the Middle East, the press began to polarize into supporters and opponents their reaction to regional developments gradually changed.

CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (1955-1958)

In the second half of the decade, the first challenge that the DP government faced was the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the immediate Israeli attack on Egypt supported by the UK and France. Turkey favored a peaceful solution to the Suez crisis and participated in the London conferences, supporting the US solution and insisting on the freedom of passage through the canal. (FRUS 1955-57, v.16.i.8, p. 250-252) In addition, the DP government opposed the Israeli attack on Egypt and recalled its ambassador in Tel Aviv back to Ankara as a diplomatic reaction. (From Tehran to Foreign Office - FO 371. 121793. VR 1091-766,767)

The Suez Crisis was closely followed by the press and *Zafer* and *Son Posta* supported the government's policy of the government. Similarly, *Son Posta* criticized the states which "caused" crises in the region. The nationalization of the Canal was denounced by columnists as a violation of international law. The writer heavily criticized states which "caused" the crises and conflicts in the region to the disadvantage of Turkey. (Emeç, 28 July 1956) Similarly, the UN was criticized for its inability to prevent the war and find a peaceful solution to the crisis. According to the newspaper, UK and France support of Israel aimed to persuade the "stubborn" Nasser but the Israeli attack could also serve to ignite a "Third World War." Emeç criticized Israel for exploiting the crisis to achieve its own goals. (Emeç, 2 November 1956) In the same newspaper, another writer argued that tensions between regional states, particularly between Egypt and Israel, could be responsible for the unrest in the region. According to this perspective, Turkey established the Baghdad Pact to provide stability to the region with its farsighted and realistic foreign policy and was proven right by the recent developments. (Erol, 1956) *Cumhuriyet* also supported Turkey's policy and argued that the nationalization of the Suez Canal indicated a new and serious situation. According to *Cumhuriyet*, if president Nasser had confined himself to the nationalization of the Canal, the crisis could have been settled by diplomatic efforts but that the serious circumstances made it difficult to reach solution. The author further predicted that Nasser would not play such a critical role.

(Coşar, 30 July 1956) According to the same writer, the DP government's approach to the Suez Crisis was correct and peaceful. (Coşar, 19 August 1956)

Newspapers and journals closer to the opposition approached the Suez Crisis differently. Writers in *Ulus* criticized the London Conferences as a failure of Western diplomacy and that the ultimate result of the conference was clear from the beginning. The paper also criticized the Soviet Union and Soviet policy during the crisis, opining that it manipulated the conference and showed a strong possibility of Egyptian alignment with the Soviet Union against the West, which would be a catastrophe. (Esmer, 1956) *Akis* held a similar position and criticized the Egyptian government during the crisis saying that the nationalization of the canal was a threat to the canal regime and Nasser's control would make the situation more serious. ("Süveys: Buhran devam ediyor", 1956) *Forum*, however, took a conflictual stance: on one hand, it supported Arab nationalism while on the other it strongly criticized Nasser as a dictator seeking to increase his own prestige for political reasons. For the journal, Nasser's arguments for the nationalization of the canal were lies that endangered foreign investments in developing countries such as Egypt and that as a result the West was correct in punishing president Nasser. ("Süveys meselesi", 1956)

To sum up, the press mainly criticized president Nasser during the Suez Crisis due to his collaboration with the Soviet Union which paved the way for the communist infiltration into the region. This shows how the press strongly internalized the prevailing *raison d'état*. Newspapers and journals closer to the government supported the DP's Suez policy, while opponents, most probably with the impact of rising pressure on the press by the government, refrained from criticizing the government and focused on developments and facts in the region rather than government's policies.

After the settlement of the Suez Crisis, Turkey and Syria found themselves on the brink of war due to a border crisis. Syria was a pro-Soviet state that signed a treaty of economic and technical cooperation with the Soviet Union on August 6, 1957. In the eyes of the West and Turkey, this treaty accelerated Soviet infiltration in the region and necessitated a reaction against Syria and the Soviet Union. Therefore, the DP government mobilized troops near the Syrian border in the name of seasonal military training. (From Ankara to Foreign Office - FO 371. 128242.VY 10344-4,5; FRUS 1955-57, v.13. i.13, 642-4, 650, 656-7, 700-1) At the end, the tension between the two states decreased and did not evolve into a more serious crisis. (Baş, 2012, p. 95-106; Sever, 1998, p. 81-83; Kürkçüoğlu, 1972, p. 104-128; Oran, 2006, p. 629-632)

Zafer supported the government policy during the crisis. Similarly, *Son Posta* criticized the Syrian government and praised Turkey's reaction, arguing that as the communist influence increased in Syria, its neighbors perceived greater threat. According to the writer, communists in Syria maintained strategic positions that would in turn strengthen the influence of communists in neighboring states and

therefore the DP government's reaction was legitimate and other states in the region should have followed Turkey. (Emeç, 1957) *Ulus* also criticized "communist activities" in Syria and argued that the main threat to Syria did not come from Turkey but from inside the country as the Soviet Union aimed to protect pro-Soviet Syrian politicians rather than the Syrian territorial integrity and was arming the country. Therefore, Syrian application to the UN and accusations against Turkey were groundless and the crisis was artificial. (Esmer, 1957)

Cumhuriyet criticized the DP government's policy during the crisis but only as a passive and disinterested voice. The paper determined that Syrian complaints and accusations against Turkey and application to the UN were groundless. While the paper asserted that Turkey was not responsible for the crisis, it opined that the DP government should have taken the necessary diplomatic measures against Syria. (Coşar, 1957) The anti-communist and anti-Nasserist position of the journal *Akis* became explicit during the crisis and the paper strongly criticized Soviet policy and threats against Turkey. At the same time the paper recognized the reality of Arab nationalism and was surprised by the sudden eruption and settlement of the crisis. ("Ortadoğu: Rusya'dan ikaz", 1957) *Akis* implicitly criticized the DP government for its efforts to eliminate Arab nationalism by force. A writer in the journal argued that there were lessons to be taken by the DP government: the Baghdad Pact was not a remedy for the problems in the Middle East and Turkey was an outsider in the Arab world as Iraq's policy during the crises obviously showed. Turkey's closest ally in the region Iraq was closer to Syria than Turkey and therefore, Turkey's efforts to take on leadership in the region was be fruitless under these circumstances. Arabs could solve their problems by themselves and only if Turkey had not involved in regional problems, its prestige would have increased. (Avcıoğlu, 21 September 1957). In another article, the writer took a similar position and criticized the government, arguing that despite efforts to develop friendly relations with the Arab leaders Turkey was not accepted as a power in the Middle East. On the contrary, hostility towards Turkey increased and even Iraq, its closest ally in the region, supported Syria during the border crisis and opposed the transfer of Middle East oil to Europe through Turkey. The paper asserted that the DP government's Middle East policy failed and Israel was sacrificed for the sake of this policy. (Avcıoğlu, 23 November 1957) During the crisis, *Forum* criticized the government and stated that the government should not have prepared military maneuvers near the Syrian border as it caused Syria to feel threatened by these developments. The paper also reported that Syrian leaders thought that they were betrayed by the West as a result of the Israeli state. More importantly, *Forum* argued that the Syrian Crisis might be considered a tool to consolidate support behind the government ahead of the 1957 elections. ("Suriye olayları", 1957)

The border crisis between Turkey and its southern neighbor was closely followed by the press. Newspapers closer to the government such as *Ulus* supported its policy and criticized Soviet involvement in Syria and "communist" activities. In

contrast, newspapers and journals closer to the opposition, in this case interestingly *Cumhuriyet*, sided with the opposition after the oppressive DP policies following the 1954 elections, criticized the DP government's pro-Western involvement policy in the region, and recognized the reality of Arab nationalism. However, those members of the press criticizing the DP government's policy also took positions against communist activities and Soviet infiltration into the region. In short, while the division in the press became explicit during the border crisis, the reaction of the press, even the opponents, show how they tended to approach developments through the lens of US anti-communism. In other words, the press attempted to consolidate public consent against communism regardless of their relationship with the government.

The Middle East experienced radical changes in 1958. Egypt and Syria jointly declared the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) on February 1, 1958. In response, Iraq, and Jordan established the Federal Arab Union on February 14, 1958. Turkey saw Syrian integration with Egypt as preferable to Soviet domination and influence in Syria and recognized the new union right after. (From Ankara to Foreign Office - FO 371. 131338. JE 10344-1; Oran, 2006, p. 631)

Cumhuriyet followed these developments and held a position more favorable to the UAR as the unification was considered an element of stability in the region. The paper argued that the republic, however, would bolster the split of the Arab world, in which there were many problems and could endanger the Baghdad Pact by withdrawing Iraq, the only Arab member, from the Pact. (Coşar, 13 February 1958) *Ulus* approached these developments cautiously and argued that the union would be a dictatorship under Nasser rule and might lead to the "annexation" of Syria by Egypt. The paper opined that while the UAR was open to the participation of other states, the nature of the republican regime might prevent kingdoms from joining. (Esmer, 4 February 1958) *Akis* on the other hand was optimistic about the future of the UAR and stated that it should be recognized as a reflection of Arab nationalism and the will of Arabs and advocated for the West to abandon the old methods of supporting old kingdoms with arms and money. ("İki iken bir oldu", 1958) Similarly, *Forum* supported the UAR as a product of Arab nationalism. It also argued that the DP government should begin to cooperate with Arab nationalists and persuade its Western Allies to recognize and cooperate with the Arab nationalist movement. ("Mısır Suriye birliđi", 1958)

The press remained divided over the unification projects of the later 1950s. *Cumhuriyet* and *Ulus* were skeptical, particularly about the UAR and the danger of a Nasser dictatorship undermining the Baghdad Pact. In contrast, *Akis* and *Forum*, opponents of the government, regarded these two developments as a product of Arab nationalism and supported the government's policy of recognition and cooperation with Arab nationalists.

The status quo in the region totally collapsed in the summer of 1958. The military junta toppled the Iraqi government on July 14, 1958 and the King, Crown Prince, and Prime Minister were killed. One day later, the US intervened in Lebanon and the UK in Jordan upon the invitation of the President of Lebanon and King of Jordan to prevent these two countries from falling into “Nasserist and communist” elements. After the coup in Iraq, rumors about a Turkish intervention in Iraq began to circulate, especially in the West. (FRUS 1958-1960, v.12.i.9, p. 307-311) However, the DP government did not involve itself in the crisis and Ankara recognized the new government in Iraq on July 31, 1958. (Sever, 1998, p. 83-85; Kürkçüoğlu, 1972, p. 128-143; Oran, 2006, p. 632; Sander, 2016, p. 225-232)

In the press, *Son Posta* supported the Western intervention in Lebanon and Jordan following the coup in Iraq. The paper argued that the bloody events in Iraq caused grievances in the civilized world and the aim of these developments, provoked by outsiders, was to destabilize the Middle East. Similarly, the US and the UK intervened in Lebanon and Jordan to prevent the expansion of instability and unrest. (Emeç, 1958) Similarly, *Cumhuriyet* criticized elements which caused “unrest” in the Middle East and supported the intervention of the Allies. Upon the coup d’état in Iraq, a writer argued that the impact of the developments in Iraq would be serious for Turkey because the coup violated the Baghdad Pact and the West and only served the interest of Nasser. After the coup, the new regime in Iraq sent a telegram to Cairo and recognized the UAR, thus cutting its ties with the Baghdad Pact. (Coşar, 15 July 1958) Moreover, the paper supported the intervention of the US and argued that, as with the Korean War, which had terminated the Soviet threat in the Far East, the US intervention in Lebanon might have the same effect in the Middle East. (Coşar, 16 July 1958) Despite its support for the US intervention in the region, *Cumhuriyet* expressed opposition to Turkish intervention in Iraq. The writer suggested that the DP government should recognize the new regime because of the public support behind such a move. (Coşar, 23 July 1958)

On the other hand, the press closer to the opposition strongly criticized the DP’s policies during these crises. A writer in *Ulus* argued that the developments in Iraq were not surprising due to incorrect policies pursued by the West and Turkey in the region and the government did not consider warnings about the Middle East. He added that the Baghdad Pact would continue without Iraq because the new regime in Iraq established close relations with the UAR and might form a federation together. (Ecevit, 16 July 1958) *Ulus* also criticized the US intervention in Lebanon because it flamed the resentment and hostility of Arabs against the West. The possibility of establishing “mandates” in these Arab states might force the Arabs to make a choice between the West and the East and that they most probably would choose the East. (Ecevit, 17 July 1958)

Akis was also critical of the DP government’s policy before the crises. The editor of the journal argued that the Baghdad Pact would be a Pact without Baghdad

and that the government should be more “realistic” and recognize the reality of Arab nationalism. He also argued that the Soviet Union was more successful than the West in grasping the realities of the Arab world. As a result, the region became more open to Soviet influence than before. (Toker, 22 February 1958) In another article before the successive crises, the editor argued that the Middle East policy of the government failed because it did not understand the regional dynamics and that the rivalry between the leaders of Arab states was because they sought allies to reach their goals. He also urged the Turkish government to refrain from involvement in regional conflicts because the Arab world was not preoccupied with the problems of Turkey. Thus, Turkey should be more objective regarding the developments in the region. (Toker, 12 July 1958) Following the crises of 1958, the editor wrote another article that argued that the US intervention in Lebanon was illegitimate and in conflict with the principles of justice that the US had pioneered. This action would decrease US prestige in the Arab world and would be a “fiasco.” More importantly, the DP government should have warned the US, as an ally who knew the Arab world, rather than supporting the intervention. (Toker, 19 July 1958)

Forum was another journal that criticized the government’s Middle East policy after the crises in Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. The journal argued that the DP government should have cooperated with Arab nationalists rather than the kings and pashas who had already lost their popularity and support in their countries. In addition, they asserted that the coup in Iraq would negatively influence the prestige of the West in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Similarly, Turkey and the Allies should change their policies, but the US intervention in Lebanon implied that such a policy change would not occur and might accelerate the Soviet infiltration into the region. (“Ortadođuda son olaylar”, 1958) The necessity of a policy change was also emphasized by another writer of the journal who stated that the best policy for Turkey to pursue was to avoid the internal conflicts in the region and the problems between the Arabs and the West from the Soviet threat to the region. Moreover, Turkey should have aimed to protect its security and that of the region against the Soviet threat rather than being involved in regional problems. (Soysal, 1958)

In conclusion, the opponents in the press criticized the policies of the DP government and the West in the Middle East. In particular, they argued that Turkey should not have involved itself in the regional crises. Such pro-*status quo* and non-involvement reactions were similar to that of the RPP and its leader, İnönü. Opponents of the DP government in the press heavily criticized the government’s Middle East policy because they believed that the government made serious mistakes and that the relationships between the government and the press became strained as the government put heavy pressure on the latter.

CONCLUSION

In Turkey's first experience with democracy, DP government's relations with the press and the positions of the press towards the government in domestic politics and foreign policy were influenced by gradually worsening government-opposition relations. After the DP had come to power, the oppressive and restrictive single party era Press Law was liberalized. However, the second half of the 1950s witnessed a split in the press to supporters vs opponents of the DP regime. As criticism towards the government increased, especially in regard to domestic politics, the government's reaction towards the opponents became more oppressive. The Press Law was amended and journalists were sentenced to heavy penalties. Opponents of the DP in the press were arrested and jailed. In addition, opponent newspapers and journals were closed in certain periods and their financial resources were cut.

In the first of the 1950s, the press supported the developments in Turkey's Middle East policy such as the MEC project, the pact between Turkey and Pakistan, and ultimately the Baghdad Pact with the belief that the alliance formation project would create a buffer against Soviet infiltration or expansion into the region. Anti-communism and the Soviet threat unified the supporters and opponents of the DP government and both sides praised the government's US or West-centric policies as a remedy against the expansion of communism. Interestingly, the challenges and crises in the Middle East and in the DP government's foreign policy did not have any serious impact on the positions of the newspapers and journals. During the Suez Crisis, Egypt and the Soviet Union were blamed by the press. Even *Forum*, which supported Arab nationalism, found Nasser guilty during the crisis. During the border crisis between Turkey and Syria, the press heavily criticized Syria and the Soviet Union which were accused of manipulating regional politics. The DP government's recognition of the UAR was unanimously supported by the press due to the control and suppression of communism in Syria. The only exception in this period was the successive crises in Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan in the summer of 1958 when opponents such as *Ulus*, *Akis* and *Forum* heavily criticized the government's policies and the possibility of Turkey's intervention in Iraq.

Consequently, despite the split in the press between supporters and opponents of the DP government in domestic politics, the press unanimously supported DP's Middle East policy until the crises in 1958. This shows how the press internalized and supported Turkey's US-centric and anti-communist Cold War paradigm in general and DP's US-centric and anti-communist approach to the Middle East in particular.

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