

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY  
DURING ATATURK'S ERA 1920-1938  
CAUCASIA, BALKANS, MIDDLE EAST  
*FROM POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS*

ATATÜRK DEVRİ  
TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASI 1920-1938  
KAFKASYA, BALKANLAR, ORTADOĞU  
*SİYASİ, SOSYAL, KÜLTÜREL, EKONOMİK İLİŞKİLER PERSPEKTİFİNDEN*

EDITOR  
Cezmi ERASLAN





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## PREFACE

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The Turkish Republic, proclaimed at the end of the Turkish National Struggle under the leadership of Atatürk, is a state that leans on the heritage of six centuries Ottoman Empire and constructed on the ashes of it. It was naturally brought with continuity about understanding and institutions of state, because the cadre who performed the national struggle and founded the new state was the last generation of the Ottoman Empire.

Atatürk continued the reform method of the Ottoman state, which was destroyed after a long experience of reform, with more radical and radical practices. In addition, he acted more realistically in terms of understanding of dominance and did not pursue ideals that the state could not afford.

The main goal of this process was limited to realize the principles of the National Pact. It is known that they tried to find possibilities for internal reforms, around the principals of “peace at home, peace in the World”.

There are lots of research made with a political point of view about the understanding and performances on the foreign policy of Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic and the first President.

Distinguished scholars Fahir Armaoğlu and Rifat Uçarol have studied the subject in general in their political history books. Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, Mehmet Gönübol-Cem Sar and Abdulahat Akşin have handled the topic around Atatürk’s era and publications of official document like “Atatürk’s National Foreign Policy”, examined the outline of bilateral political relations in this process.

However, the political relations with the states many of them separated from the Ottoman Empire were not evaluated from the social, cultural and economic points of view with the same measure. Of course, the atmosphere that emerged after the First World War, especially the pursuit of revision in the 30s and the effort to maintain the status quo, had a great impact on this circumstance. The political dimension of the relations stood out more than any other aspect.

The aim of this study is pointing out mainly social, cultural and economic aspects of bilateral relations. However, it is noteworthy that the political dimension was not neglected in our chapters, because it is a fact that the other aspects could emerge as much as the political developments let.

This book focuses on the relations in the triangle of Caucasus, Balkans and the Middle East, after an introduction part that examines Atatürk’s foreign policy understanding and activities on the Hatay example.

The relations with Russia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, the examples of Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Albania in the Balkans and Iran and Syria in the Middle East are dealt with.

Despite our decision and efforts to concentrate our work in the social, cultural and economic sphere, the priority imposed by the conditions of the period required that political relations not be neglected.

In the relations of the 1930s, the priorities of the new national states formed after the war and the countries under the mandate were to survive with their own identity. Efforts to secure their borders have emerged as their main goals.

In this process, the Republic of Turkey has produced policies with a different identity that did not claim to be the heir of the Ottoman Empire and was not willing to resurrect it. These policies towards ensuring regional peace in the Balkans and the Middle East have largely found response. Concerned about the resurrection of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan states supported these policies of the Republic of Turkey.

The fact that Turkey's activities in the Balkans in the 2000s were called Neo-Ottomanism and that these practices were met with a reaction by the executive segment shows that Atatürk's practices in the 1930s were accurate.

In fact, after the Armistice of Mudros nothing developed in the same way as traditional perceptions. Bolshevik Russia, established in place of the Russian Tsardom, which was the greatest rival of the Ottoman State for almost four hundred years, became the most important ally of the Turkish Republic in foreign policy during the reign of Atatürk. This alliance lasted till the Second World War in cultural and economic fields.

Against the desire of France and Germany to return to the pre-war situation, the Balkan countries began to eliminate this threat by forming political and economic alliances among themselves. It is also necessary to remember that these efforts were closely related with the economic and military capacities of Balkan states.

The most considerable success of this period was seen in the relations with Greece. Greece, which had expanded its borders against the Ottoman Empire since 1830, was allowed to enter Anatolia by the British Empire in 1919, and for three years it showed its hatred inhumanely.

After experiencing serious traumas, a period of friendship was created by signing the Treaty of Lausanne and an agreement on population exchange, and this friendship was crowned with the Balkan Entente.

Turkey has developed good relations with almost all Balkan countries except Bulgaria and has worked for the sovereignty of peace in its region. Turkey has also given importance to economic relations with states such as Italy and Germany, which objected to the current status quo and could change it, and has followed their every step.

In relations with the Middle Eastern States under the mandate and patronage of Britain and France, the principle of self-determination was defended, and it was aimed to get along well with the mandater States without reaching the point of conflict and protecting national interests.

While all this has been achieved, the changing conditions in the region and the new threats that had emerged have also helped the emergence of new support for the peace-oriented policy of the Republic of Turkey. Against the threat of Germany and Italy, Britain and France began to approach Turkey positively. This relation turned into cooperation in the Second World War, which emerged after Atatürk's death.

Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in his last speech at the National Assembly said that: "The guide of our policy is the country we live in, the Turkish Nation we come out of and lessons learned from history". This realistic, sociological understanding and historical experience has also guided Turkish foreign policy.

I would like to express my gratitude to my esteemed colleagues Cemil Hasanli, Ramil Zalyaev, Liliانا Boşcan, Iliriana Kaceli, Mubariz Ağalarlı, Aras İftihari, Bülent Yıldırım, Harun Bekir, Nilüfer Erdem and Murat Aydoğdu for their scientific and intellectual contributions. Also sincere thanks to my dear Assistant Özlem Arslan for her technical support and follow-up of the workflow to carry out this project.

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