Turkish-American relations were built on a similar democratic ideology. While democracy brought the United States and Turkey closer in the early 1920s and thereafter, the attitude of Turkish government against Communism during the First Red Scare in the U.S. assured Americans that Turkey was a trustworthy ally because it shared common democratic values. Although the abolition of Sultanate and caliphate and declaration of a republican form of government determined the democratic direction of the Turkish nation, the Turkish government’s position against communism between 1920 and 1938, which US officials closely watched and reported to the White House, established long lasting friendly relations between the United States and Turkey. This bilateral relationship reached its peak during the Second World War and the Cold War. While historians’ works about early US-Turkish relations largely revolves around missionary activities and to some extent economic and financial interactions, the US archival dossiers and documents reveal the importance of the Turkish government’s attitudes against communism in this friendly relationship. Therefore, this study looks at Turkish-American relations within the triangle of missionary work, commercial activities and communism between 1920 and 1938.

**Keywords**: Turkey, United States, Communism, Democracy

**Abstract**

Turk-Amerikan ilişkileri benzer demokratik ideoloji üzerinde gelişti. Demokrasi Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’ni ve Türkiye’yi 1920’lerin başında sonra birbirine yakın...

Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma 1920-1938 Türkiye-ABD ilişkilerine misyonerlik, ticari ve komünizm üçgeninde bakıp alana yeni bir bakış açısı getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Komünizm, Demokrasi

Introduction
The history of Turkish-American relations explains why Turkey perceived the United States as a friend, not a threat, since its foundation in 1923. As with so many early ventures in U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East, initial interactions with Turkey involved commerce and missionary activity. Explaining the pattern of future American interest in Turkey, David J. Alvarez states that commercial and missionary activity led relations while political affairs was secondary (Alvarez, 1980: 2). This secondary focus was possible because of the British presence in the Middle East. Resistance to Russian advances aimed at obtaining a warm water port was an important factor in the Convention of the Straits (1841), the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Congress of Berlin (1884), and many other nineteenth-century diplomatic venues and agreements. However, during the twentieth century the United States overtook Great Britain as a world power, as British influence gradually faded in the Middle East in twentieth century (Fisher, 1964: 114). Therefore, diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Turkey gradually increased following the First World War. One of the first significant political encounters between the U.S. and Turkey emerged during negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 when there was considerable support by the Allies for a mandate, supervised by the United States, in Istanbul and the Straits. Nonetheless, because the Ottomans first encountered Americans through commercial and religious ventures, Turkey later continued to regard the U.S. as friendly and relatively non-threatening as political affairs came to dominate their interactions. However, there were many interruptions in these relations. The first tension in American-Turkish relations took place during World War I when Armenians sought support against the Turks from Henry Morgenthau, American ambassador in Turkey. The second cessation in their relations surfaced during the Cold War when Turkish forces occupied Cyprus in 1974 known as Kıbrıs Barış Harekatı

1 For detailed account of the American policy in the Middle East from 1776 to the present, see, John A. DeNo-vo, American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-

1939, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); Michael B. Oren, Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2007).
US-Turkish encounters took place in four different interconnected areas: economy-religion and diplomacy-communism. The United States’ and Turkey’s friendly relations significantly revolved around common democratic values and their attitudes against communism particularly in the 1920s and 1930s.

**Early Economic Relations**

The first contact of American merchants in Turkey dates back before the outbreak of the American Revolution in the eighteenth century. During the Revolution, “Boston already was the colonial centre for Turkish Products” (Fisher, 1964: 115). Although the Sublime Porte (Bab-I Ali) had previously denied American merchants’ commerce on Ottoman soil, American entrepreneurs cultivated an interest in the empire in the beginning of the 1700s. During the Revolution, Boston entrepreneur William Lee Perkins became established in Izmir, one of the trade centres in the Ottoman Empire. Opium became an important trade commodity, “and in some years more than half of the Turkish opium was carried in American ships.” In the 1800s, American merchants increased their profits in Turkey. U.S. ships discharged as much as a million dollars’ worth of cargo in the Ottoman Empire. The profit of trade with Turkey was so significant some American merchants refused to serve on the Committee for Greek Relief during their Revolution in the 1820s, as they feared that it would hurt their commercial interests in the Ottoman Empire (Fisher, 1964: 115-17).

In the nineteenth century, trade relations strengthened between the U.S. and Turkey. Although the British continued to dominate the Turkish trade, American trade prospered on the empire’s soil. While in the early 1800s trade between the two countries totalled over $500,000, by 1900, the value had increased to over $8 million (Alvarez, 1980: 17). Despite its growing commercial interests, the United States politically refrained from involvement in Turkish domestic and international affairs. Thus, during the Crimean War, in 1855 during a crisis over Bulgaria, and in 1911, during the Turco-Italian war, the United States maintained strict neutrality. Any involvement of the US in vataniye (pertaining to the Ottoman Empire) matters could have jeopardized commercial relations with the Porte.

**American Missionaries in Turkey**

Missionary activities in the Middle East started as early as the nineteenth-century, parallel to American trade activities in the Ottoman Empire. Founded in 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was the first organized missionary society in the United States. Following its foundation, the society sent its members to the Middle East, including Turkey. Although the ABCFM sent two missionaries, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, to Ottoman lands in 1818, missionaries did not arrive in Turkey until 1831, when William Goodell, H. G. O. Dwight, and Gottlieb Schaufler became the first American missionaries to visit Istanbul (Kocabaşoğlu, 1989: 29-33). The missionaries the ABCFM sent played an important role in informing U.S. policies toward Turkey. Although many missionaries had

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4 The Ottoman Empire had more territory than just Turkey. The first missionaries landed near present day Lebanon and Palestine, which are no longer under Turkish control. For more information, see H.G. Dwight, Christianity Revived in the East or, a Narrative of the Work of God among Armenians of Turkey (New York: Baker Scribner, 1850).
direct influence on the government officials, they primarily influenced public opinion with publications, like newspapers, books, and pamphlets.

American Protestant missionaries were some of the main figures involved in Turkish-American relations. However, missionary activities in Ottoman lands depended on American ambassadors and State Department officers in Turkey. The American and Turkish discourses, therefore, oscillated over time. While the missionaries in Ottoman lands during the tenure of Ambassador Morgenthau were almost able to get full diplomatic and economic support from the White House, this support faded when Washington appointed High Commissioner Mark Lambert Bristol to Turkey from 1919 to 1927.

American Protestant missionaries’ plans to convert Muslims generally ended in fiasco; therefore, they concentrated on non-Protestant Christians in the Empire, who were mostly Gregorian and Orthodox Armenians. They helped ignite nationalist activities among the Armenians throughout the 1870s and these reached such a level that the Porte suspended missionary schools, publications, and entrance to the empire (Erhan, 2004: 5-6). Nonetheless, such measures did not prevent their access to the empire, and missionary numbers continued to increase from 34 in 1845 to 209 in 1913 (Daniel, 1970: 94). By the 1870s, missionaries opened many schools in eastern and south eastern of Turkey. These schools helped to create a nationalistic conscience among Armenians. Many Armenians, after being educated in these schools, organized a revolution against the Empire. The Turks, therefore, looked upon the missionary schools as nests of sedition (The New York Times, 15 August 1904: 6). However, this dramatic augmentation in their presence affected the course of relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States.

When the American President Woodrow Wilson appointed Henry Morgenthau, Sr. as an ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Morgenthau could not disguise his admiration for the missionaries’ activities in Turkey. He recounted, “I found that...Christian missionaries in Turkey were carrying forward a magnificent work of social services, education, philanthropy, sanitation, medical healing, and moral uplift” (Morgenthau, 1922: 175-77, 203-4). Morgenthau fully supported and respected the missionaries, becoming very close to them. H. L Gates, the president of Robert College, Christopher Rhinelander Robert, in Istanbul, recounted in his memoirs: "We were most fortunate in our ambassador. ...We became very good friends, and we used to ride [horseback] together several times a week"(Grabill, 1971: 65). Having good relations with the ambassador gave the missionaries courage to undertake more activities in Ottoman lands, as the ambassador sought to alter Turkish policy toward the Armenians.

Morgenthau, Gates, and William Peet, whose father was a Congregational clergyman, were three important figures in Turkey in the first decade of the twentieth century. They had similar sympathies for Armenians because they knew most of the missionary structure depended on Armenians, and the elimination of minorities in the empire would cause the missionary structure to fail. They thought Washington, D.C. should take action. Morgenthau started to send regular letters to Secretary of State Robert Lansing. With the guidance of missionaries, he intervened in Turkish domestic problems regarding Armenian issues, neglecting his obligations to abide by the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country. The Ottoman government, therefore, expressed its anger toward and discontent with Morgenthau.

5 While the Armenians calls the incidents during the First World War genocide, the Turks have refused to accept it. For the ongoing debate see, Taner Akçam, The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire,(Princeton University Press, 2012); Ahmet Tetik and Genelkurmay Başkanı, Arsiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri, 1914-1918 (Armenian Activities In the Archive Documents, 1914-1918), (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basım Evi, 2005-2008).
Enver Pasha, the Ottoman War Minister, notified Morgenthau that, "We do not want the Americans to feed the Armenians," (Morgenthau, 1922: 169) implying they should not encourage Armenians against the empire. Furthermore, Minister of Marine Djemal Pasha in his letter asked Morgenthau "if Armenians were Americans" (Grabill, 1971: 66-7). He was stating that the domestic situation was none of Morgenthau's business. After the United States joined World War I, Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha told Morgenthau, "You seem to represent all our enemies" (Morgenthau, 1922: 172). Getting adverse reactions from most of the Ottoman government officers, Morgenthau was compelled to return the United States after the First World War.

Bristol, United States High Commissioner and U.S. ambassador to Istanbul from 1919 to 1927, shifted America's policy from a religious perspective to economic interests. Bristol thought missionaries had exaggerated Armenian issues, and "he addressed letters to senators in 1919 denying the ACIA's [missionary organization] depiction of unbearable conditions in Armenia" (Malkasian, 1984: 358). Admiral Bristol faced many criticisms for having a pro-Turkish viewpoint and being more realistic about the Armenian situation. In fact, the "Near East Relief, and the Armenia-American Society" sought Bristol's recall as High Commissioner, because they saw his ideas on the Armenian issues and on missionaries unacceptable (Daniel, 1959: 265).

Bristol's priority was to increase economic relations with Turkey. In doing so, he did not act aggressively, but "utilized the Open Door in the traditional manner to reduce the political and economic control of the European Powers over Turkey, thereby providing an open field for American merchants, industrialists, and shippers to find new markets in Turkey" (Bryson, 1974: 451). Committed to American economic interests in Turkey and the Near East, Bristol "safeguard[ed] American interests wherever possible. Protecting and extending business interests was undoubtledly the job Bristol enjoyed most" (Buzanski, 1960: 211). He recognized the conflicts between American missionaries and merchants. He believed Washington, D.C. needed to give priority to the needs of merchants. However, missionaries did not want Bristol to shape the U.S. foreign policy based solely on economic expansion. They thought such a policy would jeopardize their activities, in particular their support for the Armenians. In such thinking, the missionaries were right because "Bristol unalterably opposed an American mandate for Armenia" (Buzanski, 1960: 211). He believed goodwill in Turkey would enable American economic expansion, and he thought, "Turkey should be maintained as a whole and given good government, universal education" (Bristol Papers, 17 August 1919; Kuran, 1987). However, the discussion of an American mandate over Armenia during and after the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 brought Turkey into direct diplomatic relations with the United States as never before.

**Diplomatic Relations**

Attempts at diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States date back to the 1840s. The diplomatic relations got closer during the Great War. The Entente Powers, except Russia, met in January 1919 to decide about the future of occupied territories, including Turkey. They agreed to break up the Ottoman Empire into its component elements. While Armenia, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and Mesopotamia were freed from the Ottoman Empire, the Straits were internationalized. Furthermore, the British proposed a mandate over colonized territories, including Anatolia and Armenia. However, President Wilson, in his first Paris draft for a League of Nations, addressed the mandate question. On January 10, 1919, the American President proposed to "exclude all rights or privileges of annexation on the part of any Power."
Emphasizing the importance of self-determination, Wilson stated, “All policies of administration or economic development be based primarily upon the well-considered interests of the people themselves” (Howard, 1931: 219). Like Turkey, many nations in the region were determined to hold their future in their hands. Therefore, they did not embrace mandate status.

America’s position on such mandates was initially complex and contradictory. Wilson contended in a press conference that he did not make any mandate promises concerning Turkey, claiming “I have no right to promise anything of that kind.” Nevertheless, he asserted that the American people would accept an Armenian mandate because of American interests in the region. He continued, “I have felt that there would be a certain advantage in our being at Constantinople (Istanbul), in that it would keep it out of European politics.” The United States Senate and people did not commit themselves to the idea of taking on mandates (Helmreich, 1974: 124-5).

European diplomats’ views of the mandates did not fall in line with Wilson’s vision of national self-determination. Despite Wilson’s clear proposal of self-determination and the unity of Turkey at this time, other European representatives proposed that America take a mandate in Turkey. However, Wilson believed he would not have the support of his fellow Americans because they would be reluctant to dispatch troops to Turkey during peacetime. Although Wilson’s statement filled British Prime Minister Lloyd George with despair, the British moved to include another territory in the lands to be taken from Turkey (Howard, 1931: 220-21).

After a long discussion about mandate system in the international arena, Turkey declared its independence in 1923. The similarities between the founder of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s foreign policy and Wilson’s foreign policy were visible. Atatürk saw war as a crime, and he believed a war had to be necessary and inevitable. Although the word necessity is vague, Atatürk, in his writings, explicitly defined it, “as long as the existence of the nation is not exposed to danger, war is a crime” (Atatürk & Melzig, 1943: 7). Having experienced many wars, including the Great War, he knew the terrible effects war could have on a nation. Thus, after the foundation of the Republic in Turkey, he devoted himself to world peace and order. He concluded, “one should think as much of the peace and prosperity of all the nations in the world as of the existence and well-being of his own nation”. Like Wilson, he believed in self-determination. He stated, “This nation has the sole purpose to live free and under human conditions” (Atatürk & Melzig, 1943: 15).

While the rhetoric of world peace was similar, Atatürk and Wilson differed in their practices. After the Great War, President Wilson proposed the creation of an international organization, the League of Nations, to provide a forum for resolving international disputes. In his address to the U.S. Congress on January 8, 1918, Wilson called for a “general association of nations...formed under specific

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6 On April 26, 1920, the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers, in conference at San Remo, invited the President of the United States of America to act as arbitrator in the question of the boundary between Turkey and Armenia. Unfortunately, President Wilson’s Letter to the President of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers does not accord with President’s Fourteen Points, which asked equality for all nations. In his letter to the President of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers, Wilson openly stood against the Turks by stating, “I have approached this difficult task with eagerness to serve the best interests of the Armenian people.” Then the President concluded his remarks, “In approaching this problem it was obvious that the existing ethnic and religious distribution of the population in the four vilayets [Erzerum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis] could not, as in other parts of the world, be regarded as the guiding element of the decision.” Although this Armenian protectorship remained in question in the 1920s, general US-Turkish relations improved. For more see, “President Wilson’s Letter to the President of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers” in The Frontier Between Armenia and Turkey as Decided by President Woodrow Wilson, November 22, 1920 [Armenian National Committee], Cornell University Library Collection.
covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike” (U.S. Department of State, Wilson’s Fourteen Points, 1918). Although the U.S. never became a member of the League of Nations, it had a substantial influence on the League. In this respect, Wilson’s contribution to world peace was enormous. In fact, the Turkish government was impressed by the U.S. Senate’s disapproval of a mandate over Turkey. These sentiments and trust brought the Turkish government closer to the United States during WWII. The Turkish government trusted the U.S. for help in keeping their sovereignty safe against the traditional interests of Britain and Russia in Turkey, which became explicit in the Cold War.

Lewis Heck and Admiral Bristol represented the United States in Turkey after the end of World War I. Bristol moved into the U.S. embassy in Istanbul and assumed broad duties. He reported himself, “I have taken the responsibility of Senior U.S. Representative...I am taking care of the relations so far as the armistice terms and all military and naval affairs are concerned” (Bristol MSS, Box 9). Bristol’s appointment on August 12, 1919, as the United States High Commissioner in Turkey clearly established him as the United States’ chief representative in the Republic of Turkey. Although the commercial exchanges between the two countries gradually dropped during the war, trade between the two nations revived again with Bristol’s appointment after the war.

In October 1918, Turkey ended hostilities with Allies by signing the Mudros Armistice (Mondros Müzarekesi). After securing the approval of the Allied Supreme Economic Council, there was a rapid increase in American interest in Turkey. Many businessmen rushed into Turkey to build fortunes. Trade immediately boomed between the nascent Republic of Turkey and the United States.

American imports doubled; the value of American imports reached almost $40,000,000, and exports to Turkey rose to $42,000,000 in 1920 (Gordon, 1932: 65-6, 146). Many American companies, including the Guaranty Trust Company of New York and the American Express Company, opened branches in Turkey. The sudden commercial increase between the two countries led the Turkish people to believe that America would dominate Turkish foreign trade. However, none of this trade was based on a formal treaty agreement. Thus, the need to regularize Turco-American relations emerged.

The Turkish Grand National Assembly found the treaty drafted at the first Lausanne in 1922 unacceptable and proposed an alternative draft to reopen negotiations with Great Powers. These were to be: complete abolition of capitulations-trade concession given to European Powers-, the postponement of Mosul problem, and immediate evacuation of occupied territories by the Allies after peace. In order to get their draft accepted, the Turks ratified the Chester concession on April 10, 1924. This concession allowed the United States’ development of oil and railways in Turkey. However, this also conflicted with French rights on the Samsun railways concess-

7 There are different numbers in historiography regarding the trade amount between the United States and Turkey. Roger R. Trask shows a different number, he concludes, “Total trade expanded to $62,234,724 in 1919 and $82,014,734 in 1920, as contrasted with $527,596 in 1918.” However, what everybody agrees upon is that the commercial exchanges between the two nations were doubled.

8 The Mosul Vilayet was a part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the First World War. However, Great Britain occupied the Vilayet after the war and it became the source of tension between the Ottoman Empire and Britain. Although there was a constant resistance the Turks, Britain managed to bring the issue into the international arena, scaling it down to a frontier problem between Turkey and Iraq. For more see, Nevin Çosar and Sevtap Demirci, “The Mosul Question and the Turkish Republic: Before and After the Frontier Treaty, 1926,” Milletlerarası Müsəsehetler Türk Yıllığı, no.35, (2004), 43-59.
Acceptance of the Turkish concession was an attempt to receive and secure American support and influence dividing the Allies (Karpat, 1959; Howard, 1931: 280). Ratification of the Chester concession alarmed Paris, and led the French to protest to both the Turkish and American governments.9

While the Treaty of Lausanne marked the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, it enabled the nascent Republic of Turkey to sign a treaty of friendship and commerce with the United States at Lausanne. Hoping to strengthen his position against the Allied Powers, İsmet İnönü, the Turkish delegate, sought American support. Joseph Grew, the American delegate at Lausanne, and İnönü initiated a Treaty of Amity and Commerce that they signed on August 6, 1923. The treaty provided for normal relations between the two countries; it completely abolished capitulations and recognized Turkey’s full equality with other nations.10 Two treaties were signed between the United States and Republic of Turkey at Lausanne. Although the White House did not officially recognize Turkey until the Treaty of Lausanne, the treaties signed between the two parties at Lausanne represented American recognition of Turkey.

However, the Treaty of General Relations signed between the US and Turkey on August 6, 1923 was not ratified by the Senate and was never enforced.11 One of the other treaties signed on August 6 was an extradition treaty, which was ratified by the President of the United States on February 21, 1934. This treaty went into effect on August 18, 1934 (Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 711.67/71-711.679 Residence and Establishment/141 1930-39). These treaties were milestones for the normalization of the relations between the two countries after the Armenian incidents before and during WWI.

Falih Rifki, who was a deputy of the ruling party and a journalist between 1923 and 1950, published an article in Hakimiyeti Milliye titled “Our American Friends” that focused on the normalization of relations between Ankara and Washington. Drawing similarities between the American and Turkish revolutions, Rifki stated, “America was considered... the home of creative energy. The chief quality of the Turkish Revolution was its energy in overthrowing the old institutions.” Thus, he explained how the Americans were in a position to understand the Turkish situation. Blaming Ambassador Morgenthau for the bad relations between the two countries in the 1910s, he contended, “We all remember Ambassador Morgenthau’s role in creating in America the atmosphere of the old enmity against us.” Rifki, however, touched on the good relations between the two countries after Morgenthau left Turkey. He stated, “Admiral Bristol, Mr. Grew and the present Ambassador ... Mr. Sherrill...those who study the history of Turkey’s foreign policy will not forget to mention the names and works of these friends of ours.” His words reflected the Turkish government’s feelings and position. This also marked the willingness of the Turkish government to initiate new commercial and political agreements with the United States.12

The relations between the United States and Turkey gradually improved until it was manifested in a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation promulgated on October 1, 1929. Although it took some time for Ambassadors Grew and Sherrill to remove the image of

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9 Turkey and the US established their political and diplomatic relations after the First World War, which encounters to the Ataturk Era. For detailed Turkey and US relations from 1923 to 1938, see Semih Bulut, Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-ABD İlişkileri : (1923-1938), (Ankara : Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2010).

10 The American Senate did not approve the treaty; thus, it failed to fulfill its mission on January 18, 1927. A month later, Admiral Bristol, once again, initiated the formal relations between the two countries on February 17, 1927. See, Howard, The Partition of Turkey, 313.

11 The text of Treaty was printed in the Congressional Record for March 25, 1928, page 6250.

12 Charles Hitchcock Sherrill was the United States Ambassador to Turkey from 1932 to 1933. For more, see Falih Rifki Atay, “Our American Friends,” Hakimiyeti Milliye, July 1, 1932.
“The Terrible Turks” Morgenthau had created in American’s minds, they were successful in bringing the two nations closer together and encouraging commercial activity. In March 1929, after the Senate’s assurances that it would approve a commercial treaty with Turkey, Grew continued his talks with the Turks. The formal talks took place in September and October of 1929. The final proposal was submitted to the Turkish Parliament and the U.S. Senate. According to Grew, Turkey was ready to ratify the treaty for several reasons: “its balance of trade with the United States was favourable; it wanted to interest sound American companies and capital in its public works program; it realized the ‘moral prestige’ which would accompany the pact” (Trask, 1971: 111). Signed by Grew and Menemenli Numan Bey, the Turkish representative, the treaty included three important articles. Article I of the treaty pledged both countries to accord most favoured nation treatment in respect of import and export duties and other duties and charges affecting commerce. In Article II, both countries guaranteed each other treatment equal with other countries concerning prohibitions or restrictions on imports and exports. Article III provided free trade on both nations’ waters, specifically stating, “Vessels of the United States of America will enjoy in Turkey and Turkish vessels will enjoy in the United States of America the same treatment as national vessels.”

Although the Treaty of Commerce of 1929 was built on the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and the Ottoman Empire of February 23, 1862, there were significant modifications. The first article of 1862 stated the privileges of the most favoured nation would be granted to the United States, but the treaty of 1929 granted it to Turkey. The October Treaty of 1929 was in effect until 1939, when a new Trade Agreement replaced it.

American interests in Turkey from 1930 to 1939 were chiefly economic and diplomatic. Turkey was one of America’s leading sources of tobacco. The U.S. also imported “Turkish liquorice, hides, sausage casings, and figs”. In return, the Turks bought “automobiles, radios, lubricating oils, typewriters” from the United States. Furthermore, the American Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, which is now a part of ExxonMobil, “has long occupied a predominant position in the Turkish market in competition with Shell, Steaua Romana and other oil companies.”

On the cultural side, since the early nineteenth century, the United States opened many educational, medical, and religious institutions in Turkey. Robert College and the American College for Women, established by a missionary named Cyrus Hamlin and a merchant Christopher Rheinlander Robert, in Istanbul are some of the institutions still in operation. However, on the political side, both countries were cautious in dealing with communism from the 1920s to 1939.


For a detailed account of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and the Ottoman Empire on February 23, 1862, please see, United States, and George P. Sanger, “Treaty with The Ottoman Empire February 25, 1862,” The statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America from, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1863).

Division of Near Eastern Affairs, “Policy of the United States toward Turkey,” December 7, 1944, Political Relations Between the United States and Turkey, 1930-44, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as PRBUT, 30-44).

The earliest contact between the United States and Turkey is visible in the 1800s and this contact was institutionalized after Turkey joined NATO in 1952. The recent work that covers Turkish-American diplomatic and political relations is published by Şuhnaz Yılmaz. For more see, Şuhnaz Yılmaz, Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent, (New York&London: Routledge, 2015).
Approach to Communism

The Turkish approach to Communism during the First Red Scare defined Turkey as a reliable future ally for the United States. Like many democracies, the United States feared the communist ideology and its spread in the country. Because the Soviets founded the COMINTERN (Communist International) in March 1919 to conduct and spread communism to various countries, including the United States and Turkey. Fearing Communism, the Senate Judiciary Committee submitted its report on Bolshevism in 1919. The committee compiled this report over more than eight months. In this first report on Bolshevism, the committee pointed out that there would be chaos if the U.S. government were replaced by the “red terror” of the Soviet Union. The committee reported that there were radical revolutionary groups and organizations in the United States that accepted the doctrine of the Bolsheviks. The report introduced these organizations and groups as a threat to government of the US, claiming “the initial step in their formula, to wit, the overthrow of existing governmental institutions and the complete demoralization of modern society.” Furthermore, the committee stated that the word ‘Bolshevism’ became a generic term in the US and it was nothing, but “a slogan of the elements of unrest and discontent” (New York Times, June 15, 1919). Associating the word ‘Bolshevism’ with violence, rioting, disorder, and the destruction of life throughout the report, the committee fears about the danger of communism to the United States and this period took its place in the history of the United States as ‘First Red Scare.’ Although the White House was careful and neutral about its feelings towards the Soviets, U.S. officials carefully monitored the Turkish approach to Bolshevism. Thus, the attitude of Turkey against communism between the wars placed Turkey as a trustworthy American ally.

The official correspondence between the Department of State and the United States’ Embassy in Ankara shows that Washington, D.C. inquired about the position of the Turkish government on communism as early as the 1920s. Upon an inquiry from the Department of State, Ambassador Grew informed the White House about communist activities in Turkey. In this report, Grew stated that the relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union were only commercial. Ambassador Grew also transmitted a conversation he had had with Esat Bey, Chief of the First Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Grew concluded that Esat Bey was “sure that no member of the Soviet Embassy at Ankara had been recalled for carrying on communistic propaganda.” Furthermore, Grew stated that Esat Bey told him, “Since the Turkish Government did not tolerate it [Communism]..., the Soviet Embassy had refrained from endeavoring to initiate any such activity.” In fact, such policy against communism was visible among members of the Turkish Parliament.

In his memoirs Çankaya, Falih Rıfkı Atay presented the Turkish official position about communism. Atay stated that the communist ideology endeavored to influence the Turkish Parliament during the days when it was established. The founder of Communist Government Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, known as Lenin, supported national movements fighting imperialism because he wanted to settle and fill the places where the imperialist powers left. In this regard, the extremist members of communism in the Turkish Parliament stood against Atatürk. On July 14, 1920, at the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku representative of the Comintern concluded, “We do not forget a moment that the Turkish national movement under Atatürk is not a communist movement.... We will wait until a true people revolution start [in Turkey].” Atatürk and the Parliament knew

these Soviets sentiments towards them. However, “Ankara had to get along with the Soviets because the government was looking forward receiving armaments and financial support from Russia” (Atay, 2010: 320-22). Because Turkey just got out of the war of independence and needed financial support from the foreign powers, it maintained balanced relations with Russia.18

United States’ officials in Turkey monitored such communist activities until the Second World War. They reported many arrests of communist activists and Russian spies. Turkish Police officers cracked down on communist activities until the late 1930s. As a preventive measure, they arrested some fifteen suspects in early spring 1930. The police played an active role during this period in ferreting out spies and communists. Consequently, many suspects were arrested, deported, and put on trial in Trabzon, Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara from 1930 to 1936.19 However, the Minister of National Economy’s decision to send forty Turkish students to Russia deeply disappointed the United States’ officials in Turkey. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Charles H. Sherrill, United States Ambassador to Turkey, described this incident as “disquieting.” Furthermore, he wrote, “it seems like playing with fire to send up into the Moscow revolutionary propaganda atmosphere forty students.”20 Although there was no clear indication in these reports and correspondence that the United States openly supported the Turkish government in ending the communist activities at the time, the Turkish policemen’s repression of such activities pleased the U.S. officials. The Turkish stand against communism at such an early stage made it appear reliable to the U.S. officials.

While commercial, cultural, and social activities fostered better relations between the United States and Turkey, Atatürk told the world to be cautious about another possible world war. Because the League of Nation became a political tool in the hands of Great Britain, Atatürk, in urging the world to create a peace organization, stated in 1935, “If war were explode suddenly, like a bomb, nations would not delay combining their armed forces and national potentials to prevent it. The fastest way and the most effective measure is to establish an international organization which would prove to the aggressor that its aggression would not pay.” Atatürk clearly expressed the necessity of a world organization and desire for peace. His words guided Turkish foreign policy. To him, “the real and lasting danger” to the Turkish sovereignty was the Soviet Union, mainly because of Turkey’s rapprochement with France and the Great Britain. Thus, Turkey became vigilant and cautious about Russia (Kılıç, 1959: 73).21

Conclusion
American-Turkish relations did not develop overnight; rather, it was a long process of interactions before it reached the fruitful diplomatic level during the Second World War and the Cold War. While missionary and commercial activity had priority in these relations until the late nineteenth century, diplomatic and political affairs replaced missionary activity in the twentieth century. The concerns

18 While Atatürk maintained a well-balanced relation with the Soviets, he did not allow communism penetrate into the Turkish community. The state constantly monitored and controlled the communist activities. For more information see, Rasih Nuri İleri, Atatürk ve Komünizm, (Sümer Matbaası: İstanbul, 1970).
19 “Espionage, Communism, Disorder” Spring-Summer 1930, IAT, 30-44.
20 Charles H. Sherrill to the Secretary of State, “Turkish Students to Study in Russia,” Istanbul, February 17, 1933, IAT, 30-44.
21 For more detailed account of US-Turkey relations, see Gürcan Balık, Turkey and the US in the Middle East: Diplomacy and Discord During the Iraq Wars (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016); F. Stephen Larrabee, Troubled Partnership: U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010); Ersin Onulduran, Yakın Dönem Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (İstanbul: Bilgesam, 2009).
and tensions that missionaries created in the Ottoman Empire, in particular between the Turks and the Armenians, necessitated such changes. Further, the appointment of Admiral Bristol as the United States’ high commissioner in Turkey shifted the U.S. policy from an emphasis in religious to economic and political relations. Lastly, the process of democratization and the cautious attitudes of the Turkish government against communism built a secure and trustable relation between the two parties.

United States President Wilson’s vision of self-determination and his Fourteen Points calling for post-World War I peace and respect for national sovereignty were some of the universal values that the nascent Republic of Turkey shared. The U.S. Senate’s disapproval of a mandate over Turkey planted the seeds for future positive relations between the two states, which came to fruition during and after WWII. Further, the shared reactions to threats of communism by Turkey and the United States solidified an alliance in the interwar period.

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