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# AN OUTLINE OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE YEARS OF WWII

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## Introduction

After the end of World War I, the most important problem on the global agenda was to create a lasting environment of peace. However, a study of the treaties signed after the war, which were intended for the so called “peace”, and one could easily guess that this was never going to happen. due to the fact that these treaties were forcing very onerous conditions on the losing states.

The destruction of large empires led to changes in the balance of power. On the one hand these treaties were far from being able to restore world peace, and on the other, the power vacuum brought about by the collapse of the great empires had created a generally unstable situation throughout the world. This instability led to another great war in, arguably, a very short period of time.

Germany had been a defining force in Europe, but after the war the government was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles, which placed too many difficult conditions for the state to regain its power. The Soviet Union, which was established in place of Tsarist Russia, could not assume any significant roles in international policies for the time being as it was trying to establish and internalize its own new regime. New states were established in the lands of the collapsed Austro-Hungarian Empire and these lands were the scene of many future conflicts. Although Italy was among the victorious states, the country was so worn out by the war that it faced serious internal turmoil in the post-war years, which then led to a regime change in 1922 to Mussolini’s fascist administration. As England was not interested in the structures in Europe as it had been before the war due to its foreign policy, the rising power elite in Europe was France.

The Middle East had been under Ottoman rule for a long time, but when the empire lost that territory, it became the stage for the power struggles within Europe. It was a known fact that Britain and France often conflicted over strategic territories which would establish dominion over Middle East. The two states signed secret treaties between themselves which they would implement immediately after the war, thereby filling the void of power in that part of the world.

The unstable environment in Europe forced the European powers to compete for resources outside the continent. Before the war, the defining powers in the far east were Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan. However, when the German Empire and Tsarist Russia were brought down, these two states’ Far East policies also came to end.

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Britain immediately focused its foreign policies on the Middle East and India, thereby pulling away from the Far East, albeit indirectly. France, out of concern for possible German strikes, focused on the security of its own territory. This only left Japan as the defining power in the Far East. Japan became stronger due to its advantageous position over China, which drew the attention of the US. Between the two wars, competition in the Far East was driven by the US and Japan. Turkish foreign policy during Atatürk's era was developed in this environment (Balcıoğlu, 2002). Atatürk's ideal was to bring Turkey in line with the West in terms of civilization. His vision was to create a modern Western society in Turkey so he directed the state's foreign policy in line with this (Duran, 2008: 47) and paid utmost attention to establishing good relations with the West. Atatürk believed that creating a Western structure in Turkey was necessary for security. In the same vein, Europe could only be on good terms with a Turkey which was similar to it in nature (Gönlübol ve Kürkçüoğlu, 2000: 24).

In Atatürk's era, Turkey's foreign policy focused on principles of maintaining good relations with neighboring states and establishing regional defense alliances. Atatürk always followed a proactive path in foreign politics. A reactive policy result in a state defining its policies according to those of its counterparts, which means that the counterpart always maintains the initiative. The Ottoman Empire was significantly damaged due to its reactive foreign policy, therefore Atatürk reacted to this by establishing a dynamic foreign policy for the new state. An example of this was Turkey's pioneering role in the signing of the Balkan Entente on 9 February 1934, as a consequence of its proactive policy against Italy's expansionist politics (Sandıklı, 2008: 105). In this way, it can be said that the ideas of İsmet İnönü in the second half of the 1930s were consistent with the foreign policy Turkey adopted during Atatürk's era. Turkey followed a Western-centric foreign policy in the times of both Atatürk and İsmet İnönü. In this sense, it is not really possible to draw clear lines between the sub-phases of Turkish foreign policy that was pursued during the era of single-party administration. Throughout this period there was a consistency and totality in the approach to foreign policy, rather than a differentiation (Koçak, 1992: 159).

After the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İsmet İnönü strove to direct Turkish foreign politics in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne. Protecting the balance implemented by the Treaty of Lausanne was among the fundamental foreign policy objectives of Turkey (Gönlübol ve Kürkçüoğlu, 2000: 22). The "holiness of land" understanding brought about by the National Pact had resulted in a tendency for the administration to preserve the status quo. For this reason, Turkish foreign policy has always rejected developments in its region which could lead to changes to the status quo (Gözen, 2009: 48). The fundamental objective here is to preserve the status quo so as to maintain the order established by the Treaty of Lausanne. The Turkish Republic always strove to

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contribute to the policies of countries which aimed to maintain the balance of power within Europe. However, when Italy and Germany, the two expansionist powers within Europe, made attempts which threatened the security of Turkey, Turkey was forced to follow a more dynamic policy in the international arena. Therefore, Turkish Foreign Policy actively developed bilateral relations with other states in order to prevent potential situations in the region which may have posed a threat to the survival of the country.

The foreign policies adopted by the Turkish Republic were centered around a neutral stance. However, European power groups generally attempted to draw Turkey into line with them due to the country's strategic location. Turkey's primary concern was its own safety, therefore the state chose to establish a variety of diplomatic relationships with each side. General foreign policy in İnönü's time was important since it represented one of the best examples of the concept of "balance policy". Turkey's balanced attributes set an example for a country, which was relatively small and underdeveloped in terms of its military, in dealing with international matters. It is also a striking example of how a small country could avoid being used as a pawn in international politics. (Hale, 2003: 74).

### **Outline of Turkish Foreign Policy at the Beginning of the War**

Although the general path of Turkish foreign policy in relation to the war emerged primarily as a neutral stance, there were also some rapprochements in diplomatic relations with some states. In diplomatic relations, however, Turkey sought to avoid arrangements that could directly involve the state in a possible war. Turkey tended to sign treaties that would secure the country's borders without the state becoming involved in the European power struggles.

Turkey's commitments, which the state undertook until 1 September 1939, the starting date of World War II, which could have affected its relations with the different sides in the war, were as follows (Aydın, 2002: 399-400):

1. The Kellogg–Briand Pact.
2. A neutrality and non-aggression commitment made under the Treaty of Amity and Neutrality (Non-Aggression) signed with the Soviet Union on 17 December 1925.
3. The commitment to not enter into a pact against each other within the framework of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed with Afghanistan on May 25, 1928.
4. A commitment to neutrality in accordance with the Neutrality, Reconciliation and Judicial Resolution Treaty signed with Italy on 30 May 1928.

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5. In line with the protocol on extending the Treaty of Amity and Neutrality signed with the Soviet Union on 17 December 1925, “... *A commitment to refrain from entering into any negotiations aimed at making political agreements with neighboring states directly by land or sea without the knowledge and consent of the counterparty*”.
  6. A commitment to nonaggression and neutrality in accordance with the Treaty of Amity, Security, Neutrality and Economic Cooperation signed with Iran on 5 December 1932.
  7. In accordance with the Balkan Pact dated 9 February 1934, a commitment to intervene if any member of the Pact is under attack by a country or a country cooperating with a Balkan country.
  8. A commitment to refrain from intervening in internal affairs, to respect the immunity of borders, and to commit to nonaggression in accordance with the Sa’dabad Pact dated 8 July 1937.
  9. In line with the declarations signed with Britain on 12 May 1939 and with France on 23 June 1939, a commitment to provide naval assistance in the event of any war in the Mediterranean, and a declaration of the intention to sign a treaty for the same purpose.

Certain developments in the Middle East forced the Turkish Republic to side with Britain and France in 1939. Nevertheless, this policy drew a harsh reaction from Germany and Italy. With foresight, the Turkish administration considered that by siding with Britain and France, the Soviet Union would follow. The Italian expansionist policy in the Middle East and the Balkans was a source of concern for Turkey. In 1936, Italy began militarizing the islands it had invaded in the Aegean Sea, which was a sign that Turkey was right to be concerned about their expansionism. At that time they were not the only country to be concerned about it. The British and French interests in the Mediterranean were also under threat from Italy. This prompted the declaration of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement on 12 May 1939. The reason being that common threats began to emerge as common interests (Çiftçi, 2010: 238). Being concerned about certain inclinations in Germany’s foreign policy, Turkey took action regarding its straits which played a crucial role in its security. The Montreux Convention dated 20 July 1936 gave Turkey rule over its straits and the right to deploy military force to disarmed locations. Turkey’s support for Britain was also helped by the Nyon and Geneva Conventions (Soysal, 1989: 520).

Turkish support for the Western states prompted Germany to adopt a harsher attitude towards Turkey. Five days before the publication of the Joint Declaration, on 7 May 1939, Germany halted the shipping of war munitions which had previously ordered from

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them by Turkey. The *Batıray* submarine had also been ordered and had been built in the shipyards in Kiel but it was also not delivered to Turkey. The engines of two submarines which were built by the Germans in the Golden Horn were taken back to Germany when on their way to Istanbul. In addition, the deliveries of 29 cannons, 12 torpedoes and 68 war planes to Turkey were also cancelled (Uçarol, 2013: 880). In response Turkey played their chromium card; they reduced the amount of chromium that they had been exporting to Germany and also slowed down delivery (Koçak, 2013: 115). Germany thus threatened politically in the context of trade relations with Turkey. Then İsmet İnönü reminded the German Ambassador Von Papen, by way of historical reference, that Turkey had entered WWI in 1914 on the side of Germany because of two ships which had not been delivered by Britain, and also protested Germany's attitude by refusing to participate in a ceremony on 28 August 1939, in honor of the Golden Horn launching of the submarine *Yıldıray* built by Germany (Özgüldür, 1993: 115). Germany's negative attitudes towards Turkey, which began in May 1939, created very tense relations between Ankara and Berlin. On the other hand, the Soviet Union were in talks with Britain and France, which offered hope to Turkey, but the talks did not last long. On top of this, the signing of the German-Soviet Pact on 23 August 1939 created a further predicament for Turkey.

Turkey was quite aware that they could not singlehandedly cope with a potential Soviet threat. On the other hand, Britain attached importance to Turkey and through its statesmen, the government was demonstrating its willingness to support Turkey. The disclosure of tension in Turkish-German relations and the resultant Turkish-British rapprochement led the Soviets to enter into a treaty with Turkey. The fundamental reason behind this action was concern for a possible German attack. For this reason, the Soviets were inclined to side with Turkey against an alliance between Italy and Germany. The Soviet plan was to respond to a prospective German attack on British and Turkish lines, or to get on good terms with Germany to avoid their first attack (Bilge, 1992: 130). However, in a short time the Soviets came to an understanding with Germany in a treaty signed on 23 August 1939, rather than pursue an alliance with Britain and France, which also included Turkey.

Originally, Turkey intended to stay neutral and refrain from entering any alliances but Italy invaded Albania on 7 April 1939, and after that Turkey was looking to become part of an alliance. The first embodiment of this was the publishing of a Joint Declaration between Britain and Turkey on 12 May 1939. According to this, the two states would sign an alliance agreement which would guarantee each other's national security. The common security zones discussed here were the Mediterranean and the Balkans. In a sense, this tied Turkey to the "Peace Front". The Soviets had not reached an agreement with Hitler as yet and were also on good terms with Turkey, therefore they did not respond to the Turkish-English rapprochement. As soon as the French crisis in Hatay

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was resolved, a declaration similar to the one entered into with Britain on 23 August 1939 was signed (Üçok, 1955: 357). However, in a very short time Turkey encountered a very disappointing development in which they were left with no options regarding the two other states. On 23 August 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed a nonaggression pact. Until this time, Turkey had hoped that the Soviets would join the Peace Front.

At this time Mussolini was on the same terms with Hitler and the three leaders presumed that Turkey, left in a conundrum against the German-Soviet Pact, would be forced to change its stance, which would then ruin the plans of Britain and France for the Eastern Mediterranean (Gönlübol ve Sar, 1987). Turkey was apparently being forced into a predicament. Left with the dilemma of either siding with its sizable neighbor, the Soviets, and leaving the Britain-France alliance, or staying neutral in order to maintain the Joint Declaration, Turkey realized that it had also a third option which was to maintain friendly relations with both sides. The third option was what Turkey would go with.

Even after five weeks from the start of the war, Turkey retained its hope that it could become a “bridge” between Britain and the Soviet Union. However, the Soviets intended to alienate Turkey from Britain. Within this environment which was very delicately balanced, an invitation was sent from the Soviet Union to a committee, comprising Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu, Vice Secretary General Cevat Açıkalın and Political Affairs General Manager Feridun Cemal Erkin, to pay a visit to the Soviets on 22 September 1939. The committee arrived in Moscow on 25 September. The Soviets were aware of the issues being pushed by the Germans and in the talks, they set up their conditions which were very difficult for Turkey to accept. Their intention was to have a pact signed which would set up a joint defense in the Turkish straits, alter the Montreux Convention so that the straits would be closed to warships of states which had no coastlines to the Black Sea, and generally have Turkey separate from the Western countries (Bilge, 1992: 138-139). Şükrü Saraçoğlu stated that since the tripartite treaty had been initialed and the Treaty of the Straits was international in nature, it would not be possible for the states to simply alter this treaty (Erkin, 1968: 140). In 1936 a treaty similar to Stalin’s proposal had been on the agenda between the Soviet Union and Turkey. At that time Turkey had made a similar proposal. These developments were an indication that the world order and international relations had changed fundamentally, and that Turkey and the Soviets had exchanged their roles (Deringil, 2003: 92). During the talks, the German Foreign Minister Von Ribbentrop came to Moscow, which led to a German influence in the Turkish-Soviet negotiations. The Soviets even went so far as to postpone their talks with Turkey to make room in the schedule for German-Turkish talks. The second Turkish-Soviet meeting was between Şükrü Saraçoğlu, Stalin and Molotov and the Soviets repeated their demands made at the first meeting. The Soviet protocol, prepared under German influence, showed almost no respect for the independence of

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Turkey. In their proposal, the Soviets demanded that they be given exclusive rights to cross the Turkish straits and administer the straits jointly with Turkey. As a result of the opening of the straits completely to Soviet warships, and the closure of the Black Sea thereby turning it into a closed inland sea, the balance that had previously existed in the straits was tilted in favor of the Soviets. In this sense, the Soviet demands effectively gave the Soviets a final say in all of Turkey's affairs (Uçarol, 2013: 884). In addition, the Soviets had requested that Turkey remain neutral in the event that the Soviets annexed Bessarabia and Dobruja in Bulgaria, which basically meant that Turkey should accept any Soviet expansionist movements into the Balkans. As could be understood from these Soviet requests, any Turkish defense would be subject to Soviet consent in the event of war, which ignored Turkey's right to its own security, and in particular to the principle of independence. Hence Saraçoğlu rejected the Soviet requests. Negotiations did not yield any results and ended on 16 October 1939, when Saraçoğlu left Moscow (Gürün, 1983: 72). The failure Saraçoğlu suffered in Moscow began a new era in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey had failed to bring its two powerful friends to an understanding. Consequently from that point on, Turkey had to regard the Soviet Union from a different perspective (Deringil, 2003: 94).

Concerned with its sour relations with the Soviet Union, which was made clearer by the abovementioned negotiations, Turkey was forced to adopt a new line of foreign policy which was focused on a Soviet threat, which then prompted Turkey to side with the Western governments. The Turkish administration therefore referred back to the negotiations which had previously been started with Britain and France, with the intention of concluding them as quickly as possible. As a result, the administration signed a Mutual Assistance Treaty with Britain and France on 19 October 1939. This alliance treaty acted as an indicator of the country's position in the war. The 13th Council of Ministers (9 July 1942 - 8 March 1943), presided over by Şükrü Saraçoğlu, expressed the following regarding foreign policy within the government program: *"Turkey, which accepts no foreign power as its guide, sought to stay outside the war, which was made possible through a conscious and constructive neutrality"* (Ateş, 2008: 58). The principles mutually agreed to in this treaty were:

1. In the event of an attack against Turkey by a European country, Britain and France would provide every assistance needed to Turkey for defense.
2. In the event that Britain and France are attacked in the Mediterranean, Turkey would provide every assistance reasonably possible to both countries.
3. Due to the warranties given by Britain and France to Greece and Romania, Turkey would provide assistance to Britain and France should they enter the war against a third country.

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4. Apart from the cases mentioned above, in the event that Britain and France enter the war due to an attack by a European country, Turkey would stay neutral in response to any developments regarding these two countries.
  5. In the event that the parties enter the war due to the enforcement of this treaty, a mutual decision would be made regarding an armistice or peace.

The term of the treaty was to be 15 years. However, if, during the six months prior the end of this term, none of the parties announce their wish to terminate the treaty, then the term of the treaty would automatically extend for another five years. According to an additional protocol included in the agreement, it was multilaterally accepted that the warranties that Turkey was committing to, by way of the agreement, would never result in circumstances in which Turkey would be prompted to enter into armed conflict with the Soviet Union. According to this agreement, Turkey was completely severing its ties with the Soviet Union and at the same time taking precautions that would prevent it from entering into any war or conflict with the Soviet Union (Üçok, 1955: 358). These developments also led to changes in Turkey's foreign policy, which had been established based on positive relations with its neighbors. Here, of course, the approach of the Soviets had been effective. When Turkey established their alliance with Britain and France, the Soviets reacted by halting their oil shipments to Turkey (Koçak, 2013: 95).

### **Turkey Faced with the Predicament of War and Pursuing a New Balance in Foreign Policy**

By establishing an alliance with Britain and France, Turkey guaranteed its security against possible Italian and German attacks as well as the Soviet threat, thereby creating a balance in foreign policy. When France lost to Germany in the summer of 1940, they also lost the status of being an ally to which Turkey would provide support. This development created a void in Turkey's foreign policy. When the war broke out, Turkey began facing threats from various directions, particularly from the Balkans.

After a short time, Turkey took steps to reenact the Balkan Entente due to the threat developing in the Balkans, because Germany and the Soviet Union had already shared Poland's territory between them. Despite all its efforts, Turkey was left isolated because the Balkan countries all refrained from confronting Germany (Gönlübol ve Sar, 1987: 145).

Germany's attack on Poland did not force Turkey to enter the war, but Italy's entrance into the war brought Turkey virtually face to face with the conflict. The reason for this was that when Italy entered the war it extended the conflict into the Mediterranean. On 13 June, the British and French ambassadors sent requests, via Şükrü Saraçoğlu, for Turkey to enter the war in accordance with their alliance treaty. This was a natural request,



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since Turkey had already accepted this obligation pursuant to the treaty. However, on 22 June France signed the armistice with Germany. Meanwhile, Turkey never received the armaments that they had been promised. If Turkey entered the war and the front was extended to the Middle East, this would place Britain in a difficult predicament. Britain would then not be able to provide any assistance to Turkey. Considering the status of both Britain and France and the reaction of the Soviet Union, Turkey determined to stay out of the war.

On 28 October 1940 when Italy attacked Greece, this became a matter of concern for Turkey as this development demanded that the 3rd Article in the Turkish-British-French alliance be put to effect. The articles of the Balkan Entente only guaranteed the borders between the Balkan countries, therefore Turkey was under no obligation to assist Greece. However, Britain demanded that Turkey enter the war as soon as possible. At this time Turkey, facing the German threat, was prevented from entering the war. On the other hand, Turkey informed Bulgaria that in the event that they attacked Greece, then Turkey would assist Greece against them. Consequently Turkey effectively took Bulgaria out of the war, and Greece was then able to withdraw its military forces from its Bulgarian border and use them to fight against Italy, which meant that Turkey had indirectly helped Greece (Armaoğlu, 1994: 408).

The issue of the division of the world into zones of influence was discussed between the Axis Powers and the Soviets in November 1940. Turkey was used as a tool for negotiation in these talks. According to the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, Russia had to have bases in the Turkish straits (Erkin, 1968: 167). Molotov also pressed to influence Turkey into separating from the British alliance and joining the Axis Countries. Despite Britain being left isolated when France pulled out of the war and the Balkan countries coming under imminent danger, Turkey stayed loyal to the British alliance. Turkey's stance and the declarations of President İsmet İnönü were warmly welcomed by Winston Churchill.

The Germans' attempt to invade Bulgaria through Romania in January 1941 was a source of concern for Britain in regard to both Greece and Turkey. If the Balkan countries fell, Turkey would then be faced with threats both from the North and the West, so it would be extremely difficult to cope with the German pressure. Therefore Britain was intending to stop the German advances in the Middle East and, for this purpose, they attempted to mobilize the Balkan countries against Germany. On 31 January 1941 Winston Churchill sent a letter to İsmet İnönü, which set out the possible outcomes if Germany were to succeed in its invasion of Bulgaria and requested that Turkey enter the war to prevent this. The German plans to invade the Balkan countries also concerned the US. Then President Roosevelt sent Colonel William Donovan to the region. Donovan arrived in Turkey on 1 February 1941 and asserted that the US would prevent the Axis Countries from winning the war by themselves entering into the war (Gönlübol ve Sar, 1987: 153).

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When the British and American attempts failed to prevent the German advances, Turkey took the precaution of mobilizing its military forces in the Thrace region. This gave Bulgaria cause for concern. Afterwards, at the Bulgarian government's instigation, a joint statement was published in Ankara on 17 February 1941. This joint statement was an assurance for Bulgaria. On the other hand, Turkey was relieved since this declaration would prevent Bulgaria from aiding a possible German attack on Turkey. In his message to İsmet İnönü on 4 March 1941, Hitler stated that Germany had to intention of attacking Turkey (Soysal, 1989: 631). In his message, Hitler stated "*I commanded the troop commanders to refrain from closing in on the Turkish borders unless they were forced to by way of precautions that the Turkish state takes*". However the Turkish decision makers believed that they could only secure themselves by their own measures, hence they did not trust any external assurances (Çiftçi, 2010: 243).

Britain was not content with the situation in the Balkan region and the fact that the progression of events was working against them, and therefore they attempted to reenact the Balkan Entente. For this purpose they sent their Foreign Minister Anthony Eden to Ankara on 26 February. Eden had a meeting with Saraçoğlu in Cyprus and following this meeting, a proposal was made to Yugoslavia to establish a united Balkan front. This received to response. This meant that Britain did not succeed in establishing a Balkan Block against the threat of the Germans moving in on the Balkans. This was due to the fact that Yugoslavia was avoiding a provocation to Germany (Armaoğlu, 1994: 409). An agreement signed on 25 March 1941 in Vienna added Yugoslavia to the Axis Countries. However, just two days after this agreement an insurrection broke out in Yugoslavia, which put the government established by Simovic, which did not recognize the agreement made with the Axis Countries, in charge of the state. This prompted Germany to declare war on Yugoslavia, shortly after which they invaded the country and then went on to invade Greece.

The situation was becoming riskier for Turkey. As with the Polish situation, it was thought that Germany, which had placed Turkey in a very dangerous situation, and the Soviet Union, would crush Turkey. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was concerned that the Germans might also take control of the Turkish straits after taking control of the Balkans, so they sent a message that they would remain neutral in the event of a German attack on Turkey. This prompted a Turkish-Soviet Declaration in Moscow and Ankara on 25 March 1941 (Soysal, 1989: 634-636).

The war in the Balkans was progressing in favor of the Axis Countries. Yugoslavia was beaten and Greece surrendered. In another part of the world, Iraq had suffered a coup led by Rashid Ali-al-Geylani on 5 April, after which a pro-German government was put in charge. Even though it was known by then that the Germans would aid Rashid Ali-al-Geylani, they had not foreseen that he would come to power, nor were they ready to aid

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him. At this stage, Hitler had no plans to oust the British from the Middle East. Rather he was interested in the Balkans and was preparing for Operation Barbarossa (Hale, 2003: 82). The new Iraqi government needed German support before anything, in order to stand firm against Britain. But this assistance could only come through Turkish territory. Germany put pressure on Turkey to use Turkish land as a transit for their military cargo in order to both provide aid to the new government in Iraq and to seize the bases that the Vichy administration had left for them in Syria. In the process, when Germany seized Crete and Aegean islands, Turkey stood against the German pressure and rejected offers to be granted territory from Western Thrace and the Aegean Islands. Despite pressure from Germany, Turkey stayed out of the war, and in addition, prevented any bellicose states from exploiting its territory. This in turn prevented Germany from extending its operations into Syria and Iran for the primary objective of capturing the Persian Gulf in order to unite with the forces of Japan in the Indian Ocean (Gönlübol ve Sar, 1987: 156).

The developments in Iraq also delayed the execution of Hitler's plans for the Soviet Union. Consequently Germany signed the Turkish-German Nonaggression Pact on 18 June 1941 in Ankara. While Turkey was expected to adhere to their British alliance, the fact that they tried to reach agreement with the Germans can be subject to criticism. However, considering the strategic situation of the time, it is obvious that they took the most secure path. (Hale, 2003: 86) According to this pact, which consisted of three articles and extended for a term of ten years:

1. The Turkish Republic and the German Reich would mutually respect the immunity and integrity of their respective territories and refrain from any direct or indirect aggression against each other.
2. In relation to all issues which are in the common interest of the Turkish Republic and the German Reich, the parties would henceforth hold friendly talks in order to come to a mutual understanding and resolution (Soysal, 1989: 639).

This result was the fruit of rather resilient Turkish policies. Germany secured its geographical right wing with this pact, and then as their next logical step, they attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June. Due to this pact the US reacted against Turkey, since they were on the side of Britain, and halted the "Loan-Hire" assistance they had been providing to Turkey. In response, Britain transferred part of the aid it had been receiving from the US to Turkey (Armaoğlu, 1994: 410).

These developments, which occurred within a short time, also provided relief for Turkey because, when Germany attacked the Soviet border on 22 June, Turkey declared neutrality towards both states. In actuality, Turkey did not want to face either a German or a Soviet threat. As the Italian Ambassador De Poppo said "*The Turks' ideal outcome was that the last German soldier would fall upon the last Russian corpse*" (Hale, 2003: 86). During

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this process, Turkish chrome had been a significant matter of competition. Germany sent committees to Turkey for negotiations regarding chrome, which concerned Britain as Britain was buying all the chrome that Turkey could export. On 9 October 1941, a commercial treaty was signed between Turkey and Germany, under which Germany guaranteed to buy 45,000 tons of chrome, 12,000 tons of copper, 7,000 tons of cotton and 8,000 tons of olive oil in 1943 and 1944 from Turkey (Koçak, 2013: 443). The US reacted strongly to this treaty, even though it was, at this time, more anti-war than Britain. However, the US Ambassador to Ankara, Mc Murray, intervened to avoid a greater problem. To the US, Turkey was an ally of Britain. Therefore the US continued aiding Turkey through Britain (Arcayürek, 1987: 146). Towards the end of 1941, Turkey received a certain amount of American aid. In addition, Turkey sent a list to the Washington Government on 16 December 1941, which contained details of the country's most urgent needs for its air defense (Arcayürek, 1987: 152-153). So as a general conclusion, Turkey managed to use the Axis Countries and Allies as leverage against one another for commercial purposes, just as it did for political purposes (Weisband, 1974: 113).

When the US entered the war on 7 December 1941, some reservations were resolved but Turkey spent 1942 under pressure from both the Axis and Allied countries, which made its policy of neutrality increasingly difficult to pursue. The Axis Countries' attack on the Caucasus in the north and on Suez in the south directly involved Turkey in the process. Meanwhile, Germany was still hopeful that Turkey would join the war against the Soviet Union. But Turkey did not comply, even though they were offered the Aegean Islands by the Axis Countries. They were merely spectators to the Soviet-German war and the developments in Africa, and it was wrong to obtain a benefit from Britain's affairs in the North African wars and the Soviets' losses against the Germans. As far as territorial promises were concerned, certain very interesting details arose from the Saraçoğlu-Von Papen meeting. In a report dated 27 August 1942, Von Papen quoted Saraçoğlu's opinion concerning Soviet expansionism and therefore the Russian Turks. As a Turk, Saraçoğlu would have very much liked Russia to be destroyed. On the other hand, as the prime minister of the country, he knew that the state must act neutrally for the sake of its future (Alman Dışişleri Dairesi Belgeleri -Türkiye'de Alman Politikası (1941-1943), 1977: 68-71).

The losses of the Axis Countries in El-Alamein in 1942 and in Stalingrad in November 1942 greatly relieved the German pressure on Turkey, but there was then an emerging Soviet threat. In a very short time, the Soviet Union reassumed its hostile attitude against Turkey with the Soviet press directing very harsh criticism at Turkey, and relations between the two countries became more tense. Another development which also contributed to these tense relations was the assassination attempt on the German

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Ambassador to Turkey, Von Papen, by Soviet agents. Despite all attempts by the Soviet Union, the Turkish justice system convicted two Soviet agents. These results led the Soviets to further increase their pressure on Turkey.

The allied countries did not cease their attempts to urge Turkey to enter the war. It can be seen that, at all conferences held throughout the war in which Turkey participated, Turkey had been encouraged to enter the war. Before setting out for Adana, Churchill told the US Foreign Minister, Hopkins, in Casablanca: *“I’ll tell [İsmet] İnönü that if they stay out of the war, then I will not be able to control the Russians after the war regarding the straits issue. They wouldn’t stand for this”* (Deringil, 2003: 189). As a result, at the Casablanca Conference it was decided that a Balkan front would be opened with Turkey’s participation. On 30-31 January 1943, during talks with İnönü and Saraçoğlu, Churchill communicated the allied states’ requests on the Presidential Train at Yenice Station in Adana to the Turkish committee. The allied states requested that Turkey enter the war by the end of 1943 at the latest. The Turkish committee responded to Churchill, stating that they could not be sure of the Soviet Union, that the Soviets would be in a position to gain control over Europe now that the Germans had been defeated in Russia, and demanded that Turkey be effectively guaranteed of security, and its military be compensated for its shortcomings in terms of armaments. Despite pressure from Britain, who were very determined to get Turkey involved in the war, Turkey stood firm to maintain its neutral position. The fundamental reason for this was that Turkey did not trust the allied states either. According to Turkey, the actual issue in this process was the imminent loss of any balance once the Soviets had settled in Europe. On 19 June 1943, a written communication sent to Von Papen in London by Menemencioğlu is reported to state: *“We do not wish that Germany be destroyed. We can not contribute to this destruction. Preserving Germany’s existence is important for the European continent”* (Deringil, 2003: 189).

The Axis Countries were suffering loss after loss on their fronts and this gradually increased the pressure on Turkey. On 17 August 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill discussed Turkey at the Quebec Conference. They decided that they would request that Turkish airports necessary for a second Balkan front be allocated for Allied use. At the Moscow Conference for foreign ministers held between 19-30 October 1943, the Soviet administration insisted that Turkey join in the war. According to the Soviets, Turkey’s neutrality served Germany more than it did the allied states (Armaoğlu, 1994: 412). Immediately prior to the conference at the beginning of September, an article, which had previously been published elsewhere, was published again in Izvestia (a Soviet newspaper). The article stated *“Turkey’s neutrality is becoming more and more beneficial and indispensable for the Germans. Due to Turkey securing the Balkan wing of the German armies, it has made it possible for Germans to hold that territory with*

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*very little military force so that the Germans can use the majority of their troops in the Soviet-German front*” (Weisband, 2002: 155). Throughout the conference, Britain’s attitude towards Turkey mirrored that of the Soviet Union. (Deringil, 2003: 205) Another important issue discussed in this conference was the role Turkey would play in the war. The Soviet Union demanded that Turkey be included in the war through pressure, if necessary. According to Molotov, Turkey was not to be “requested” but rather “ordered to” enter the war (Armaoğlu, 1994: 413). Molotov also stated that the Turkey issue “*could turn into a festering wound after the conference*” (Deringil, 2003: 207). The intentions of the British were in the line with the Soviets, but the US objected, stating that they would not be able to provide Turkey with necessary military equipment because of the military landing planned in France. As a result, it was decided at this conference that Britain would request the right to use Turkish airports, and that efforts would be made to force Turkey to enter the war by the end of 1943.

Afterwards, the British foreign minister, Anthony Eden, and his Turkish counterpart, Numan Menemencioğlu, held a meeting in Cairo. Eden considered Menemencioğlu as pro-Axis (Weisband, 2002: 166) and, in this respect, Menemencioğlu seemed to have a tough job ahead of him. During the talks held over 5-6 November 1943, Anthony Eden expressed to Menemencioğlu that the British were having a difficult time in the Mediterranean and that the islands of Leros and Samos had been invaded due to Germany’s supremacy in the air, and he requested that British aircraft be allowed to use Turkish airbases in order to bomb the islands held by the enemy, and he requested that Turkey enter the war by the end of the year (Erkin, 1968: 215). As a response, the Turkish administration stated that they would prefer to directly enter the war rather than open up their air bases to foreign countries. According to Menemencioğlu “*The British squadrons would be enough to drive the Germans crazy but not enough to save Turkey from invasion*” (Weisband, 2002: 168). The US Ambassador, Steinhard, whom Menemencioğlu met with before his return from Cairo, reiterated Turkey’s views in his report to Washington: “*Turkey wouldn’t open up their air bases and they would rather directly enter the war. Because to them, opening up air bases and entering the war mean the same thing*” (Deringil, 2003: 212) . The British administration already knew that Turkey would be asking for arms if they entered the war, so they insisted only on access to the air bases.

The British pressure on Turkey, which was made apparent in the Eden-Menemencioğlu talks in Cairo, became even more intense after the Tehran Conference. This conference was held between 28 November and 1 December 1943 and the participants were Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Stalin insisted that Turkey be involved in the war. Stalin even said “*if need be, Turks should be grabbed by their necks and thrown into the war*” (Armaoğlu, 1994: 413). However, such discourse from Stalin is only to be found in

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Churchill's memoirs and cannot be verified from the American documentation (Deringil, 2003: 217). Therefore the consensus has been that when writing his diaries, Churchill wrote what "he wanted to hear". Since the US and Britain wanted Turkey in the war, Roosevelt and Churchill invited İnönü to Cairo and between 4-6 December 1943 they held talks with him. This was the second Cairo Conference. The Allied countries further increased their pressure on Turkey. On 15 February 1944, American and British war planes wanted to come to Turkey and demanded that they be allowed to land. They also threatened that if this demand was rejected, the consequences would be dire. In response, İnönü stressed that Turkey needed arms and expounded a list of needs which was given to Britain at the Adana Conference but only 4% of the list was fulfilled. After strenuous insistence from the allies, İnönü agreed to enter the war "in principle". The Turkish administration demanded that the ammunition and armaments needed for their defense be provided by the Allied states. Churchill accepted this, but Roosevelt thought that Turkey should enter the war after they were armed, and therefore with İnönü's view. İsmet İnönü's intention was to exploit the clear ideological differences between the Allied sides. In the end, İnönü managed to negate the intense British pressure to include Turkey in the war by using the power balance between the allies (Koçak, 1992: 170).

Having failed in North Africa and on the eastern front, Germany had to fundamentally change its policy towards Turkey. They gave up trying to include Turkey in the war and focused their efforts on securing their southern borders in the Balkans while keeping Turkey neutral in the process. For this purpose, the German administration decided to aid Turkey so Turkey could better resist the Allied pressure (Koçak, 2013: 287). In response, the Turkish administration adopted a sensitive approach. The two states signed a new commercial treaty on 18 April 1943. Germany delivered Turkey the armaments they had previously promised by the end of 1943 and Turkey increased the amount of chrome they had been exporting to Germany. In order to avoid being the target of a German attack, the Turkish administration resisted the Allied pressure and strictly adhered to their policy of balance. The state also remained indifferent to the military cooperation proposed by Britain because Germany gave the impression that they would destroy the airports in Western Anatolia before even the first British aircraft had landed on Turkish soil. That is why the German threat for Turkey persisted for such a long time (Koçak, 2013: 303).

In January 1944 and in accordance with the decisions made at the second Cairo Conference, the Turkish and British committees began negotiating matters of aid. However, the negotiations held with the British committee in Ankara were stopped on 3 February 1944. The British administration stated that Turkey had requested too much ammunition, and that delivering such a significant amount would delay the entry of Turkey into the war. Churchill presented a further threat declaring that the Turkish administration's attitude would not place them in a strong position at the peace conference (Armaoğlu,

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1994: 413). The US and British administrations adopted a stern attitude in an attempt to bring Turkey into the war. On 28 February 1944, all British engineers, technicians and consultants left Turkey. The Turkish pilots, who had been receiving training at the English base in Cairo, also returned to Turkey. In addition, the American and British diplomats in Turkey were prohibited by their governments from communicating with any Turkish officials. Consequently, Britain and the US ceased providing the weaponry and ammunition assistance that they had been providing to Turkey on 2 March 1944 and 1 April 1944, respectively (Uçarol, 2013: 905). On 19 April 1944, they also sent a diplomatic note to Turkey, demanding that Turkey desist with all chrome exports to Germany, and that a failure to comply would result in an economic embargo on Turkey. In response, the Turkish administration declared that all chrome exports to Germany would cease by 21 April 1944. This decision was another milestone in Turkey's foreign policy (Uçarol, 2013: 906).

This attitude by Britain and the US prompted Turkey to enter into talks with the Soviet Union in May-June 1944, but the Soviet prerequisite for these talks was that Turkey enter the war. Britain sent another warning to Turkey at the end of July 1944 to effectively refrain from any talks with the German administration. At this time, Turkey accepted this as at this point Germany was in a much worse condition in terms of military power. On 27 July 1944, the Soviet Union objected to this final attempt by Britain and the US to put pressure on Turkey, stating that they were too late to cut the ties between Turkey and Germany, and that this was unacceptable to the Soviet Union (Erkin, 1968: 238). This approach by the Soviet Union meant that they now wanted to separate themselves from their allies and focus on pursuing their own course to resolving their problems with Turkey on a one-to-one basis, which became the source of concern for the Turkish administration (Uçarol, 2013: 908).

In the summer months, when Germany weakened in terms of military power, and on 2 August 1944 Turkey cut its diplomatic and economic relations with Germany, taking into account recent developments in the war, in order to restore its relations with the allied states. The Turkish administration also obtained a guarantee from Britain and the US that it would be treated as a full ally at the peace conference. The reason why Turkey gave more importance to its relations with Britain and the US was that the Soviets declared war on Bulgaria on 5 September 1944, which was a threat for Turkey. In the fall of 1944, Turkey was pleased when the British transported troops to Greece and, in order to improve its cooperation with Greece, the Turkish administration declare in November 1944 that they would relinquish all claims to the Dodecanese (Armaoğlu, 1994: 413). However at this point it would be wise to point out: Although Turkey rejected the British offer and refrained from becoming an active side in World War II, Greece yielded to the same pressure and as a result, they annexed the islands at the post-war Paris Conference.



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However, given that if Turkey had sent troops to the islands that would have resulted in a German invasion, it would not really be wise to blame the Turkish foreign policy makers (Gözen, 2009: 49).

It is clear that since the end of 1944, the Soviet Union had vigorously pursued their objectives in relation to the Turkish straits. They had been attempting advances on the straits since the beginning of the war, but had achieved nothing. Towards the end of the war, they clarified their demands regarding the straits and attempted to get help from their allied states to achieve their wishes. In the Yalta Conference, which was held between 4-11 February 1945, the UN had included Turkey in the agenda due to the issue of the Turkish straits. At the conference, Stalin stated that the Montreux Convention must be changed. However, the US was not in favor of any change in status which would violate Turkish sovereignty over the straits. Britain also stated that Turkey must be assured of its independent control of the straits. It was decided at the conference that the foreign ministers would handle the issue of the straits and that Turkey be notified of the outcome (Armaoğlu, 1994: 414). Furthermore, Roosevelt requested that Turkey join the United Nations Organization which was in the early phase of establishment. Churchill, referring to Turkey's friendly attitude, supported Roosevelt's view. Therefore Stalin had to reluctantly accept the Allies' proposal (Erkin, 1968: 379).

After the Yalta Conference, Britain communicated to Turkey on 20 February 1945 that the Allied states would hold the San Francisco Conference on 25 April 1945, that the states to be invited to this conference were the ones which had declared war against Germany prior to 1 March 1945, and that Turkey would be able to join the United Nations Declaration if they decided to enter the war before this date. Whereas they could not foresee their fate after the war, Turkey still intended to play an active role in international organizations (Hale, 2003: 100). For this reason, on 23 February 1945 Turkey immediately declared war on Germany and Japan. On 27 February 1945, the Turkish administration signed the United Nations Declaration. Turkey also fulfilled the formalities specified at Yalta in order to gain the right to participate in the San Francisco Conference, the purpose of which was to re-establish the world order. Invited to the conference on 5 March, Turkey became a founding member of the United Nations. In a general sense, these developments could be construed as a solid advantage for Turkey in exchange for the favors they performed for the Western countries. Turkey was left alone in the final phase of the war, and after the war, it expected to be left alone in the intended new world order. Therefore it was only natural for İsmet İnönü to be concerned about the situation (Koçak, 1992: 170).

The Soviet Union, taking advantage of the power void in Europe left by a defeated Germany and made their imperialist ambitions against Turkey very clear. On 19 March 1945, they cancelled the Turkish-Soviet Neutrality and Nonaggression Pact which

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was signed on 17 December 1925. The Soviet Union sent a diplomatic note on 7 June 1945, which stipulated the abandonment of Kars and Ardahan to Russian rule and the provision of a military base for the Soviet Union in the straits. When handing the note to the Turkish Ambassador, Molotov said: *“Since we abandoned these lands to you in 1921, the Soviet Union has been weak”*. Meanwhile Germany surrendered on 7 May 1945, Japan on 2 September 1945, which effectively ended World War II. This meant that Turkey, two months after declaring war on Germany and its allied states, never physically entered the war and became one of the victorious states among the Allied countries (Uçarol, 2013: 911).

The Soviet Union wanted to negate the advantages Turkey had gained by participating in the UN, and to spoil the international balance the state had gained prior to the San Francisco Conference. At a time when the ending of the war meant hopes of peace and calm for the allied countries, the Soviet Union sought to leave Turkey in an unstable international position (Erkin, 1968: 250). The Turkish administration requested proposals from the Soviets on 7 April, but did not receive a response until June. In June, a meeting was held between the Turkish Moscow based Ambassador and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, at which Molotov stated that some issues needed to be resolved before the two states could sign a new pact. These issues were (Gönlübol ve Sar, 1987: 185):

1. Changes to the eastern Turkish-Soviet borders.
2. Provision of a military base for the Soviets in the event of an attack.
3. Review of the Montreux Convention.

The Turkish administration rejected the first two demands. Britain demanded that the Soviet Union postpone their demands until the Potsdam Conference. This conference took place between 17 July - 2 August 1945. At the conference, Churchill objected to the Soviet approach on the issue of Turkish straits, which had been handled as a bilateral issue between Turkey and the Soviet Union only. The US's President Truman agreed with this view. On the very first day of the conference, the Soviet administration stated that they wanted guardianship of one of the former Italian colonies. This was a clear indication that the Soviet Union was wishing to establish a presence in the Mediterranean (Armaoğlu, 1994: 415). The Soviet insistence on bases in the Turkish straits prevented the sides from coming to an understanding. This time, it was decided that each of the three states should separately communicate their views on the straits to Turkey. The approach adopted by Britain and the US against the Soviet Union meant that the Soviets would not be able to push through their demands for a base and control of the straits.

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## Conclusion

Turkey adopted a principle to remain neutral and stay out of every phase of WWII and their external policy was shaped accordingly. Due to the geopolitical importance of Turkey, the Axis and Allied countries expended significant effort in attempting to encourage Turkey to join their side, or pressured them to do so. Despite promises of land from these power elites, Turkey still adhered to its original foreign policy and, ultimately, managed to stay out of the war. Furthermore, the state managed to become one of the victors of the war without physically entering into it.

Turkey's attitude during the war process could be referred to as "active neutrality". Considering the geographical position of Turkey, this is indeed has proven to be quite a successful foreign policy. The fundamental reason for this success was, most certainly, the political heritage bequeathed by Atatürk. Kudos must go to İsmet İnönü for adhering to these principles during very difficult times because, in this period, Turkish foreign policy was directly administered by Çankaya, which was the heart of Ankara and the Turkish administration. The bureaucrats involved in the foreign policy arena became not only the definers but also the implementers of the policies. İsmet İnönü was always at the heart of every policy that was pursued and of every decision that was made.

The primary requirements of the security policies were to establish a Turkey which was in line with the West, to makes us of the power balances, and to use the power shifts throughout the war as leverage. Gaining time and staying out of the war, despite significant pressure, proved to be an irrefutable success. The main tactic in Turkish foreign policy was shaped according to military developments that occurred during the progress of the war. There were also certain views that Turkey had left some situations to chance and that, in particular critical situations, the country had just been lucky. However, in general, it is necessary to concede that it was Turkey's own strategies which created this luck. Considered in this way, it would be unfair to say that Turkey's success in foreign policy was due purely to luck.

Yet it should be noted that the policies Turkey pursued during WWII kept the country out of the war, but also led to some serious problems after the war. Turkey was virtually abandoned in the post-war conjuncture and this was mainly due to the foreign policies adopted in the time of war. For this reason, it would be scientifically prudent to approach the issue of Turkish Foreign Policy in a holistic way. The country faced certain economic turmoil which was mainly due to the wartime conditions and the policy of neutrality, but the government of the time gave a very respectable performance in managing the country's economy throughout.

All these negatives aside, it is another irrefutable truth that had Turkey entered WWII, they would be confronted by enormous difficulties and hardship.

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