

WAR OR PEACE? THE DODECANESE ISLANDS IN TURKISH FOREIGN
AND SECURITY POLICY (1923-1947)

HAZAL PAPUÇÇULAR

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AND SECURITY POLICY (1923-1947)

by

Hazal Papuççular

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Title: War or Peace? The Dodecanese Islands in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy,
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This dissertation analyzes the impact of the Dodecanese Islands on Turkish foreign and security policy between 1923 and 1947. In this respect, reflections of the military fortifications in the islands on Turkish security measures and diplomatic initiatives in the interwar period; the negotiations made based on the sovereignty of the Kastellorizo islets together with the problematic issues of maritime borders and commercial relations; the place of the Dodecanese on the strategy and diplomatic negotiations of Turkey just before and during the Second World War; and the attitude of Ankara and other interested parties regarding the transfer of the islands to Greece in the postwar period constitute the focal points of this study. All these issues are handled together with the developments in the Mediterranean geography in which Turkey is situated.

This study is essentially based on documents from the Italian, British, Turkish, and American archives. In the light of these documents and other resources, this work argues that the Dodecanese constituted a problematic area for Turkey throughout the period. It shows that these islands were one of the most dominant elements in shaping Turkish foreign and security policy during the interwar period. It also says that they continued to occupy a place in Turkish diplomacy and strategy besides other issues during the Second World War. It is emphasized that the “war” theme was usually on the agenda in the relationship of Turkey with the region: although no clash occurred, Turkey never made real peace with the area either. In addition, this dissertation designates that some problems in the Aegean Archipelago, such as the determination of the maritime boundaries or the sovereignty of the islets, which remain current issues resulting in occasional tension in the region, date back to 1923, exceeding beyond the Turkish-Greek relations of the post-1950s. Likewise, it emphasizes that the process that paved the way for the transfer of the islands to Greece in the postwar period could be analyzed only in reference to the multi-faceted concerns of Turkish foreign policy of the time, while arguing that the dominant discourses on the issue are open to critique and questioning.

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Başlık: Savaş ya da Barış? Türk Dış ve Güvenlik Politikasında Oniki Ada (1923-1947)

Bu tez 1923 ve 1947 yılları arasındaki dönemde Oniki Ada’nın Türk dış ve güvenlik politikasına etkisini analiz etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, iki savaş arası dönemde adalardaki silahlanmanın Türkiye’nin güvenlik önlemlerine ve diplomatik girişimlerine yansımaları; Kastellorizo adacıklarının egemenliği üzerinden yapılan ve sınırlar, iktisadi ilişkiler gibi problemleri de kapsayan müzakereler; İkinci Dünya Savaşı öncesi ve sırasında Oniki Ada’nın Türkiye için stratejik ve diplomatik önemi; ve bölgenin savaş sonrasında Yunanistan’a devredilmesi sürecinde Türkiye ve diğer ilgili güçlerin tutumu tezin odak noktalarını oluşturmaktadır. Tüm bunlar Türkiye’nin içinde bulunduğu Akdeniz coğrafyasındaki gelişmelerle birlikte ele alınmaktadır.

Bu çalışma temel olarak İtalyan, İngiliz, Türk ve Amerikan belgelerine dayanmaktadır. Bu belgeler ve kullanılan diğer kaynaklar ışığında bu tez, ele alınan dönemde bu küçük coğrafi bölgenin Türkiye için oldukça problemleri bir bölgeyi simgelediğini göstermektedir. Oniki Ada’daki İtalyan silahlanmasının iki savaş arası dönem Türk dış politikası ve güvenlik anlayışını şekillendirmede baskın bir unsur olduğunu, İkinci Dünya Savaşı dönemindeyse, diğer dinamiklerle bütünlüklü bir biçimde Türk diplomasisinde önemli bir yer tuttuğunu söylemektedir. Türkiye’nin bölge ile ilgili ilişkisinde “savaş” temasının çoğunlukla gündemde olduğu, sonuç olarak herhangi bir savaşın gerçekleşmediği, ancak tam anlamıyla bir “barış”ın da sağlanamadığı vurgulanmaktadır. Ek olarak bu tez, Ege Denizi’nde bugün hâlâ güncelliğini koruyan, deniz sınırlarının belirlenmesi, egemenliği belirsiz adacıklar gibi sorunların kökeninin 1923’e kadar gittiğini göstermekte, bu meselelerin 1950 sonrası Türk-Yunan ilişkilerine özgü olmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Benzer şekilde, savaş sonrası dönemde Oniki Ada’nın Yunanistan’a devredilmesi sürecinin, Türk dış politikasının çoklu dinamikleri çerçevesinde incelenebileceğinin, hâkim söylemlerin sorgulamaya açık olduğunun altı çizilmektedir.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name of author: Hazal Papuççular

Place of Birth: Bakırköy, İstanbul

Date of Birth: 17 January 1985

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED

Ph.D : Boğaziçi University Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2015

M.A : Boğaziçi University Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2009

B.A : Boğaziçi University Political Science and International Relations, 2007

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Diplomatic History, Turkish Foreign Policy, Modern Turkish History, Political Geography, Mediterranean Politics, 20th Century European History, Island Studies.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Boğaziçi University Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2010-2012.

AWARDS/GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIPS

Ph.D. Scholarship, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), 2009-2014.

Grant for Archival Research, Boğaziçi University, Commission of Scientific Research, (BAP) 2012.

Master Scholarship, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), 2007-2009.

Honors Student, Boğaziçi University, Political Science and International Relations, 2007.

PUBLICATIONS

“Fragmented Memories: The Dodecanese Islands during the Second World War.” In *Heritage and Memory of War: Responses from Small Islands*, edited by Gilly Carr and Keir Reeves. New York, London: Routledge, 2015.

“Boğazlar Rejimi: Askeri Güvenlik Söyleminden Çevresel Güvenlik Sorunsalına.” In *Türk Dış Politikasında Sorunlar ve Uluslararası Hukuk*, edited by Cenap Çakmak. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2012.

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“Italian Mare Nostrum Policy and the Formulation of the Interwar Turkish Foreign Policy in Response.” in *International Relations, Culture and Global Finance*, edited by Akis Kalaitzidis. Athens: Athens Institute for Education and Research, 2011.

“The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the Aegean: Imagined Enemies.” Review of Alexis Heraclides’s “The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the Aegean: Imagined Enemies.” *International Journal of Turcologia* 8, no.16 (Fall 2013).

“Bir ‘Sorun’un Anatomisi.” Review of Serhan Ada’s “Türk Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu, 1918-1939.” *Radikal Kitap* (20 May 2013).

“Turkey in the 21st Century: Quest for a New Foreign Policy.” Review of Özden Zeynep Oktav’s “Turkey in the 21st Century: Quest for a New Foreign Policy.” *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 36, no.3 (September 2013).

“Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II.” Review of Sarah D. Shields’ “Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II. New Perspectives on Turkey.” no.45 (Fall 2011).

“Startling Voyages: Syrian Refugees at the Borders of Europe.” *Hürriyet Daily News*, (14 November 2013).

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“Fragmented Memories: The Dodecanese Islands during the Second World War.” Paper Presented at ASN 2014, Columbia University, 24-26 April 2014, New York, USA.

“Vague Maritime Boundaries and Sovereignties in the Sea: The Problems in the Aegean Archipelago (1923-1939).” Paper presented at Turkologentag 2014, Ludwig Maximilians-Universität, 11-14 February 2014, Munich, Germany.

“Between the Islands and the Mainland: The Economic Relations of the Dodecanese with Turkey in the Interwar Period.” Paper presented at 6th Biennial Conference of Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 6-7 June 2013, London, UK.

“Dodecanese Islands in the Second World War: Islands of War, Hunger and Migration.”
Paper presented at Islands of War, Islands of Memory Conference, McDonald
Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, 5-7 April 2013,
Cambridge, UK.

“Savaşın Eşiğinde Barış: Türk Dış Politikası ve Güvenlik Stratejisinde Oniki Ada (1923-
1947).” Paper presented at Siyasi İlimler Türk Derneği 10. Lisansüstü
Konferansı, ODTÜ, 16 December 2012, Ankara, Turkey.

“The Academic Women in the Area of International Relations in Turkey.” Paper
presented at 10th METU Conference on International Relations: Rethinking
International Relations, Theory and Practice, Middle East Technical University,
15-17 June 2011, Ankara, Turkey.

“Italy in the Mediterranean: The Two-Tier Strategy of the Fascist Foreign Policy.” Paper
Presented at Second International Conference of Mediterranean Worlds: The
Mediterranean of the Myths, the Myths of the Mediterranean, 3-6 June 2010,
Istanbul, Turkey.

“Italian Mare Nostrum Policy and the Formulation of the Interwar Turkish Foreign
Policy in Response.” Paper presented at Third Annual International Conference
on Mediterranean Studies, 31 March 2010, 1-3 April 2010, Athens, Greece.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DODECANESE ISLANDS QUESTION.....	35
The Dodecanese Islands before the Ottomans.....	36
From Stability to Occupation: The Dodecanese under Ottoman Rule.....	39
Occupied Temporarily or Gained Permanently? The Vague Status of the Dodecanese Islands until the End of the First World War.....	49
The Return of the Diplomatic Deadlock: The Final Phase of the Dodecanese Question, 1918-1923.....	62
3. ON THE VERGE OF WAR: THE SETTLEMENT ON THE DODECANESE ISLANDS AND TURKISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY IN RESPONSE, 1923-1927	78
The Creation of Modern Turkey: Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy in the 1920s.....	80
What Belongs to Whom? The Legal Status of the Dodecanese.....	90
Militarization of the Dodecanese: Turkish Foreign and Security Policies in Response.....	98
Pending Problems on the Verge of the War: The Economic and Legal matters between Turkey and the Dodecanese.....	125
4. RELATIVE DETENTE: KASTELLORIZO (MEIS) ISLETS AND ECONOMIC ISSUES, 1927-1934.....	140
In Flux: Changing Conditions, Changing Diplomatic Alliances.....	142
“Good Neighbors” or Not? The Return of the Islets Question into the Scene.....	147
The Hague vs. Diplomacy: The Clash of Ideas.....	157
Return to Diplomacy: The Final Phase of a Treaty.....	173
Continuity in Negotiations after 1932.....	190
5. THE RETURN OF THE ANIMOSTY: THE RE-MILITARIZATION OF THE DODECANESE AND THE QUEST OF TURKISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY, 1934-1939.....	201
The European Great Powers on the Eve of the Second World War	204

Full-Path Foreign Policy, Inadequate Security: Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Dodecanese until the Completion of the Montreux Convention.....	212
After 1936: Sprinting towards a Full-Scale War.....	248
 6. PEACE IN WAR: DODECANESE ISLANDS AND TURKEY IN DURING WORLD WAR TWO, 1939-1945.....	270
The General Framework of Turkish Politics during the Second World War.....	271
To Fight or Not to Fight? Turkish Understanding of the Aegean, 1939-1940.....	276
On the Shores of the Dangerous Sea: Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Aegean, 1940-1945.....	296
The Other Side of the Island-Mainland Relationship: Refugees and Humanitarian Assistance.....	351
 7. THE END OF AN ERA: THE TRANSITION OF THE ISLANDS TO GREECE AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1944-1947.....	371
Fragile Balances: The Discussions on the Dodecanese until 1944.....	374
The End of a Story: The Road to the Unification with Greece, 1944-1947.....	387
 8. CONCLUSION.....	425
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	438

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The term “archipelago” stems from the combination of two Greek words, *arkhi* (chief) and *pelagos* (sea), symbolizing specifically the Aegean Sea when it is used as “the Archipelago.”¹ Since the Aegean as the *chief sea* is associated with several island groups, the literal meaning of the word has expanded over the ages in a manner such that today all island groups or the seas full of isles are referred as archipelagos. Although all these archipelagic entities are different from each other with their various features, the common denominator of these regions, from the Aegean as the starting point of the geographical term to the Pacific and the Caribbean, appears to be their problematic nature, not only for the islands themselves, but also for their relations with their adjacent mainlands.² In that respect, this dissertation examines the problematic relationship between one group of islands in the Aegean Sea, namely the Dodecanese Islands,³ and Turkey as the adjacent mainland, in the period between 1923 and 1947.

¹ Oxford Dictionaries, “Archipelago,”

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/archipelago> (accessed August 9, 2014).

² The examples about different archipelagic geographies will be presented in this chapter, as the context necessitates.

³ The Dodecanese is one of the seven island groups in the Aegean Sea, just across from Turkey’s southwestern shore. The others are the Cyclades, the North Aegean Islands, the Saronic Islands, the Sporades, Crete and Ionian Islands, and Euboea. The name of the Dodecanese Islands stem from the Greek word *Dodeca* (twelve) and *nisi* (island); implying that there are 12 isles in the group although the exact number is more than 12 when the tiny ones are counted. The best known islands of the group with their Italian names are as such: Karpathos (Scarpanto), Patmos (Patmo), Kasos (Caso), Astipalaia (Stampalia), Lipsos (Lisso), Leros (Lero), Kalimnos (Calinno), Nisiros (Nisiro), Tilos (Piscopi), Chalki (Calchi), Simi (Simi), Rhodes (Rodi), and Cos (Coo; Modern Greek: Kos) and the outlying Kastellorizo (Castelrosso).



Figure 1. Map of the Aegean Archipelago, Courtesy of University of Texas Libraries.

I argue that despite the geographic smallness of the region in relation to the Turkish mainland, the region constituted one of the most problematic areas in Turkish foreign and security policy throughout the time frame of this dissertation. While dealing with at least one problematic side of the region in every sub-period into which this study is divided, the possibility of war related to the Dodecanese was usually on the Turkish agenda. For example, in most of the interwar period, Turkey expected a possible attack from these islands under the rule of Fascist Italy, thus making the foreign and security policy decisions accordingly. Likewise, during the Second World War, whether the forces in the Dodecanese would attack Turkey or vice versa became an issue that both the domestic and the international actors discussed occasionally. Interestingly, in spite of the high probability that the officials foresaw, Turkey did not involve in a war or occupation related to the Dodecanese.

But, even if the problematic link between the islands and the mainland never led to a war; Turkey never experienced a thorough peace with this group of isles either. Indeed, even during the sub-periods in which the danger of war did not exist, such as the last years of the 1920s, or the post-war period, the place of the Dodecanese Islands for Turkish foreign policy was always a knotty issue. For instance, Turkey had to deal with issues like delimitation in the Aegean Sea, the borders of which were vague, undetermined islet sovereignties leading to tension in the region; problematic commercial relations affecting the lives of the people during the interwar period; or the transfer of the islands that would become one of the most contentious issues of Turkish foreign policy and public opinion later during the postwar period. As could be expected, none of these issues were without challenge or tension. The “War or Peace?” in the title of the dissertation essentially reflects this ambiguity, in which the Dodecanese always

represented a problematic region for Turkey, with or without the possibility of war. In this obscure environment, however, the “Dodecanese dynamic,” as I call it, mattered for Turkey, as one of the key areas that its foreign policy took into constant consideration.

Island geographer Stephen Royle states that both the geographies and the political histories of the small islands are highly perplexing,⁴ not only because they usually become scenes of war but also because they are not often self-sufficient entities. Within these complicated histories, on the other hand, they usually “tend just to be assumed into the nearest mainland local government unit.”⁵ That was the case for the Dodecanese Islands until 1912, when they were occupied by Italy. After the separation of the islands from the closest mainland in terms of sovereignty, it is seen that the abovementioned complex history based on problems became more peculiar, not only for the islands themselves as could be seen in trade with Anatolia, but also for the fronting coast.

Turkey was troubled by the Italian sovereignty, which arrived with an expansionist foreign policy view, leading to the fortification of the islands which were formulated as the military stronghold of Italian expansionism in the Mediterranean, known as the *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea) ideology. Therefore, after 1923, when Turkey transferred its sovereign rights on the Dodecanese with the Lausanne Treaty, Ankara began to perceive these islands as a threat to its national territory owing to their nearby proximity to southwestern Anatolia, often described as within “shouting” distance. It is important to note that this perception did not change throughout this epoch.

⁴ Stephen A. Royle, *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.141.

⁵ Ibid., p.147.

In this sense, this study argues that throughout the interwar years, the Dodecanese dynamic had a very crucial impact on Turkish foreign and security policy. In other words, since Ankara perceived threat from the region, it formulated its diplomatic orientation and military decisions accordingly. Likewise, during the Second World War, this area, first under the sovereignty of Italy, and then of Germany, continued to be important for Turkey, but in a much more complicated manner than the interwar period, since Turkey had to deal with other major security issues during the war years. Despite the ever-changing environment around Turkey, the Dodecanese remained always on the table in terms of security calculations and diplomatic negotiations both in the interwar and in the war years. In this sense, this dissertation displays the narrative of these calculations and negotiations, with the aim of showing how these small islands had major impacts on Turkey, as the adjacent mainland which had regarded the region as a security threat to its territorial integrity.

But, this research is not just composed of the essential impact of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy, specifically on the basis of military tension, war and occupation. It highlights other dimensions of this problematic relationship as well. One of the most important ones among them is about the maritime boundaries between the Dodecanese and the Turkish coasts with the islet disputes. In this respect, this dissertation suggests that the current disputes in the Aegean Sea, regarding the maritime borders and sovereignties date back to the 1920s although the existing literature mainly handles them within the context of the Turkish-Greek relations in the post 1950s period.⁶

⁶ These studies mainly handle these issues from the perspective of the recent problems in the Aegean Sea. Their approach to the historical background of the matter is usually restricted to the 1932 Turkish-Italian Agreement over the Kastellorizo Islets as well as the unratified convention between these two powers again in 1932, specifically with respect to Kardak. However, the

However, it is seen that the maritime problems in the Archipelago emerged in the 1920s and were discussed long before the deterioration of the Turkish-Greek relationship after the 1950s.

In addition, there were other problems between the parties, such as the commercial relations and migration that took place during the Second World War. The Dodecanese remained as a problematic arena for Turkish diplomacy even after the Second World War, in terms of the future sovereignty of the islands, as a topic that is still being discussed based on the Turkish position. That is to say, even in the times when a military clash was a distant probability; the islands represented a problem for Turkish foreign policy from many different perspectives. This dissertation aims to display the dimensions of the story at times when although there was neither war nor peace, there were troubles.

I chose to search specifically this region particularly during this epoch for several reasons. When I was writing my MA thesis on the Turkish-Italian relations in the interwar period, I saw that the Dodecanese was the key issue that affected the course of events in the contacts.⁷ In that study, while emphasizing Fascist Italy as the most important dynamic of the interwar Turkish foreign policy, I suggested that the reason for this unique place was the Italian sovereignty on the Dodecanese Islands through which these two countries had become neighbors. It is not only my master thesis that suggested this key position of Italy in the interwar Turkish foreign policy. A great number of works concerning Turkish foreign policy cite the “Italian threat” against the

border discussions in this period are beyond these legal documents. For such an example, see Ali Kurumahmut, *Ege’de Temel Sorun, Egemenliği Tartışmalı Adalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998).

⁷ Hazal Papuccular, “Turkish-Italian Relations in the Interwar Period” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2009).

Turkish territory in the interwar period, from the large scale collective studies on long-term Turkish foreign policy, to more specific ones particularly targeting the period between the wars.

For instance, the works that are accepted as the traditional resources of Turkish foreign policy, like *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası* (Turkish Foreign Policy Through the Cases) prepared by the Political Science Faculty of Ankara University; *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* (Turkish Foreign Policy: Cases, Documents, and Interpretations from War of Independence to Present Day) edited by Baskın Oran; and *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774* written by William Hale refer to the position of Italy vis-à-vis Turkey in terms of the Dodecanese.⁸ More specific studies focusing directly on Turkish-Italian relations also emphasize the fortifications in the Dodecanese that deteriorated the bilateral relations due to the Turkish fear of being attacked, such as the articles of Dilek Barlas, “Friends or Foes? Diplomatic Relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-1936,” and of Yücel Güçlü, “Fascist Italy’s ‘Mare Nostrum’ Policy and Turkey,”⁹ within the perspective of diplomatic contacts. In this respect, a recently published book by Barlas co-authored with Serhat Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean during the Interwar Era*, discusses

⁸ Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası*, vol.1 (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi 1987); Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, vol.1 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006); William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁹ Dilek Barlas, “Friends or Foes? Diplomatic Relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-1936,” *International Journal Middle East Studies* 36 (2004), pp.231-252; Yücel Güçlü, “Fascist Italy’s ‘Mare Nostrum’ Policy and Turkey,” *Belleten* 13, no.238 (December, 1999), pp.813-845.

how Italian activity in the Mediterranean affected Turkish foreign policy with an emphasis on the Dodecanese.¹⁰

Despite the importance of the Dodecanese for Turkish foreign policy and security as all the excerpts stated above acknowledge, it is hard to say that a sufficient amount of work specifically dealing with those islands regarding this period has been done. Actually, the academic works on the Dodecanese with regard to Anatolia/Turkey focus either on the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman period, or on the Greek one targeting the post-1950 era. Indeed, as an important point in the Eastern Mediterranean throughout the history, Rhodes, which functions as the administrative capital of the group, seems to have attracted more scholarly attention. In this sense, Vatin's *Rodos Şövalyeleri ve Osmanlılar*,¹¹ (*Rhodes et l'Ordre de Saint-Jean-de Jerusalem*) and Örenç's *Yakın Dönem Tarihimizde Rodos ve Oniki Ada*¹² (*Rhodes and the Dodecanese in Our Recent History*) are two important studies that shed light upon the history of Rhodes and the Dodecanese in reference to the Ottoman Empire before twentieth century.

Other studies encompassing long time frames also discuss the Ottoman period in the islands, as do, for example, Celalettin Yavuz's *Menteşe Adaları (Oniki Ada)'nın Tarihi*,¹³ (*The History of the Dodecanese*), and Cemalettin Taşkıran's *Oniki Ada'nın*

¹⁰ Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç *Turkey in the Mediterranean during the Interwar Era: The Paradox of Middle Power Diplomacy and Minor Power Naval Policy* (Indiana: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 2010).

¹¹ Nicolas Vatin, *Rodos Şövalyeleri ve Osmanlılar: Doğu Akdeniz'de Savaş, Diplomasi ve Korsanlık, 1480-1522* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2004).

¹² Ali Fuat Örenç, *Yakın Dönem Tarihimizde Rodos ve Oniki Ada* (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2006).

¹³ Celalettin Yavuz, *Menteşe adaları (Onikiada)'nın Tarihi: Andlaşmalarla Yunanistan'a Devredilmemiş Ada, Adacık ve Kayalıkların Hukuki Statüleri de Dahil* (İstanbul: Deniz Harp Okulu Basım Evi, 2003).

*Dünü ve Bu Günü*¹⁴ (The Past and the Present of the Dodecanese). However, the focal point of these works is the Greek period, in other words the post-1950 era, which is analyzed by the authors especially in terms of the recent problems around the militarization of the islands, the sovereignty of the islets, and the territorial waters. The Italian period, on the other hand, is analyzed based on the legal documents, such as the Lausanne Treaty, or the 1932 Convention between Turkey and Italy over the islets of Kastellorizo, or the transfer of the islands to Greece with the Paris Peace Treaties. Apart from these issues, the identity problems of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos occupy a place in the existing literature, again in terms of the Greek period, as the book of Celalettin Yavuz and of Bahadır Selim Dilek; *Egenin Unutulan Türkleri*¹⁵ (The Forgotten Turks of the Dodecanese).

This picture of the academic literature in terms of the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese manifests two conditions. On the one hand, while all these aforementioned valuable foreign policy studies put forward the Dodecanese as an important factor in Turkish politics, their foremost aim is not to ask how the Dodecanese influenced the Turkish diplomatic and military mind, and before this, what really occurred between the two shores of the Aegean in this period, which are the originating questions of this dissertation. In other words, the common characteristic of these studies is the fact that regardless of the issue that they problematize, the period in which the

¹⁴ Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Oniki Adanın Dünü ve Bu Günü* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1996). It should also be emphasized that Cemalettin Taşkıran's another work about the Dodecanese can be regarded as the extended version of *Oniki Adanın Dünü ve Bu Günü*. Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Ürkek bir Siyasetin Tarih Önündeki Ağır Vebali: Oniki Ada, Hatalı Kararlar, Acı Kayıplar* (İstanbul: Bab-ı Ali Kültür Yayıncılığı, 2010).

¹⁵ Bahadır Selim Dilek, *Egenin Unutulan Türkleri* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2008).

Dodecanese was one of the most important dynamics in Turkish foreign policy and territorial security falls short of a large-scale narrative.

On the other hand, in other works that are explicitly concerned with the Dodecanese Islands, specifically this period appears deficient since the emphasis is on the problems with the Greeks in the Aegean Sea. Putting aside the Turkish fear of being attacked from the Dodecanese, even the phenomena like the maritime borders or the condition of the Turkish islanders, as the popular narratives of the recent problems in the Archipelago, are poorly addressed particularly for the period under question. In brief, the detailed narrative of the islands in relation to Turkey and the key position of the islands in Turkish foreign and security policy in the interwar period present an academic dilemma. The topic of this dissertation has arisen from a desire to remove this predicament in the first place.

However, this study examines not only the interwar period but also the period between 1939 and 1947. Two major factors influenced the determination of this periodization. First of all, although the interwar period can be analyzed as a separate era of Turkish foreign policy, it indicates a piecemeal approach for Dodecanesian history. The era between 1923 and 1947 is called the “colonial period” as a whole for the islands despite the existence of disruptions in terms of the change in the administration, like the armistice of Italy in 1943, the German occupation thereafter, and the British governance that began in 1945.

Second, apart from the necessity of dealing with the entire colonial period, the deficit in the literature that was explained above for the interwar period also applies to the Second World War. Although there are works that put an emphasis on the importance of the Dodecanese in Turkish understanding during the Second World War,

like Deringil's *Denge Oyunu*,¹⁶ (Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War), and like the more recent regional study of Tamkin, *Britian, Turkey and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945, Strategy, Diplomacy, and Intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean*,¹⁷ the war literature based on Turkey still concentrates more on the Turkish position in regards to Germany and the Soviet Union with respect to the Balkans.¹⁸ But, when the link between the Aegean Sea, the Straits, and Thrace is kept in mind, it is obvious that there is a necessity for a narrative that involves seriously in the region during the war period. In this sense, the article *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Ege Adaları Sorunu* (The Problem of the Aegean Islands during the Second World War), examines the Aegean Sea, yet, mostly based on the sovereignty issues.¹⁹

As will be seen in the part dealing with the Second World War period, the Dodecanese was one of the dynamics of the Turkish security with its geographical location regarding Anatolia and the Mediterranean. It, thus, was a domain that was constantly put into consideration from different angles. In other words, the sovereignty of the islands was only one dimension of the issue. It should be noted that this dissertation does address this dimension in a separate chapter, since the transfer of the

¹⁶ Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu: İkinci Dünya Savaşı 'nda Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası* (İstanbul: Türkiye Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010).

¹⁷ Nicholas Tamkin, *Britian, Turkey and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945, Strategy, Diplomacy, and Intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹⁸ For instance, Edward Weisband, *İkinci Dünya Savaşında İnönü'nün Dış Politikası* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1974). Even more recent studies like the one of İlkin and Tekeli emphasize the Nazi threat in 1939, though this dissertation argues that the major concern of Turkey in 1939 was an Italian attack from the Dodecanese, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si -1. Cilt* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013).

¹⁹ Necdet Hayta, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Ege Adaları Sorunu," <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-36/ikinci-dunya-savasi-yillarinda-ege-adalari-sorunu> (accessed August 10, 2014).

islands remains a popular issue in Turkey, and thus necessitates an academic analysis based on different historical documents.

This dissertation thus aims to fill a gap in the existing literature, which bespeaks the Dodecanese much, yet lacks adequate knowledge on the impact of the region on Turkish foreign and security policy. As a result, it remains in the category of diplomatic history with additional military details since it shows the action-reaction chain that the course of events on and over the islands led in Turkish diplomacy as well as security considerations. With its regional approach based on a group of islands, this study is one of the few examples in Turkish foreign policy literature that is generally dominated by the narratives of bilateral relations divided by the relevant time periods.

Two points need to be underlined in this respect. First, although the Dodecanese as one group of islands seems a narrow region on which to focus in a study on diplomatic history, the close link between the islands and the broader issues of Turkish foreign policy widens the scope of the work by indicating a greater phenomenon. For example, Turkey's efforts to change the Straits regime in the 1930s and the close relationship between Turkey and Britain leading up to the World War Two were related to the Dodecanese among other dynamics, showing the abovementioned assumption of this study, that "the small islands had big impact." Likewise, the strategic location of the islands, not only in relation to Turkey, but also to the Balkans and the Middle East made up the area in which the Great Powers were interested, thus situating the Dodecanese in a much more comprehensive context. Therefore, it should be emphasized that an island group as a focal point does not necessarily limit the spectrum of this dissertation.

Second, since these islands were under the control of a specific power, in other words, the Dodecanese was not a state itself, this study deals with bilateral relations. In this respect, Italy, Germany, and Britain were the interlocutors of Turkey in its relationship with the region. Yet, the problematic relationship of Turkey with the Dodecanese cannot be understood merely based on the bilateral or diplomatic contacts. Although this dissertation could be classified under the discipline of diplomatic history, and although issues around foreign policy were discussed between the states at that time, Turkish consideration of the islands sometimes transcended the boundaries of bilateral relations with the possessors or the states interested in Mediterranean politics. This situation puts forward the interdisciplinary nature of the dissertation as well, which also involves the concepts of political geography, such as borders, sovereignties as well as the island-mainland relations.

According to the political geographers, one of the most important efforts of the states in the modern period has been to clearly demarcate borders,²⁰ as well as to impose sovereignty within those boundaries. The Dodecanese represented a troubled arena for Ankara also in this respect, leading to the problems both with the colonial power and within the island-mainland relations at the local level. During the Ottoman Empire, the islands and the mainland had been tied to each other. Therefore, the legal separation of the coasts in 1923 brought not only a maritime border problem which could not be delimited with the exception of Kastellorizo, but also local problems, since people were used to going back and forth between the shores, as in the example of centuries-long fishing and sponge fishing activities, with no notion of boundaries. In this respect, it is

²⁰ Martin Jones, Rhys Jones, and Micheal Woods (ed.), *An Introduction to Political Geography, Space, Place and Politics* (New York: Routledge 2004), p.21.

important to note that such problems related to concepts of territory, sovereignty, and space, arose sometimes independently from or exceeded the bilateral relations of the two states, despite the fact that their solution depended usually on contacts between them.

Before explaining the methodology of this study, one last point should be made about the geographic location of this work. It has already been suggested that when the interwar and war periods are analyzed, studies regarding bilateral relations dominate the literature as opposed to region-specific ones. While works about the Aegean Sea belonging to this period are rare, the Aegean Sea in Turkish foreign policy literature regarding the post-1950s is usually handled as a whole. Selecting one island group of the Archipelago as a topic for this dissertation has been necessary due to the fact that the sovereignty of the Dodecanese was different than that of the other groups, especially the northern Aegean ones near the Turkish coasts and the Turkish Straits during the period in question.

Even if it is a necessity, it also raises a question worth to ask based on the aforementioned different sovereignties in the Aegean Sea: What was the situation in the northern part of the archipelago both in regards to the Turkish mainland and the Dodecanese? Actually, this question reveals that the lack of studies on the Archipelago in the period between 1923 and 1950 is not specific to the Dodecanese. Unfortunately, this dissertation does not answer this question. Throughout the text, there are few exceptions to this lack of information, implying similarities between the south and the north in terms of their relationship with the Turkish mainland. For example, it is seen that the migration from the islands to Anatolia during the Second World War took place from the both sides. Likewise, it can be suggested that the Turkish strategic consideration of the islands during the Second World War, especially after the German

invasion of Lesbos, Chios, and Lemnos, making the Aegean an Axis dominated area, may be categorized with similar concerns. But, resembling assumptions cannot be made especially for the 1930s, during which the Turkish-Greek friendship experienced its peak point while Italy via the Dodecanese had become the dominant security threat for Turkey. In this sense, the relationship of Turkey with the Greek islands in front of the Turkish coasts constitutes a question mark.

Apart from the similar and the different meanings that the islands carried for Ankara, the relationship among the islands is an area that constitutes another question which should be brought to light. As far as the documents accessed for this dissertation show, the areas between the Dodecanese and the other island groups in the Archipelago posed similar problems to the Greek and Italian relations. For instance, a group of islets between the Cyclades and the Dodecanese became a scene of occupation in the 1930s, similar to the case of Kastellorizo. In this sense, although this study specifically asks how the Dodecanese impacted Turkish foreign and security policy, it creates another set of questions regarding the region that can point the way for other studies in the realms of political, social and economic history.

Throughout this introduction, I have emphasized the lack of information about the Dodecanese as well as the other islands in the Aegean Sea in terms of the interplay among them. Obviously, there are concrete reasons for this phenomenon. The most important one of them is closely linked to the complexity in accessing historical documents, the collection of which necessitates working with several archives in different countries and with various languages. The methodology of this dissertation exemplifies the situation.

In a research environment where, the most important source of documents of Turkish foreign policy, the archives of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs are closed to researchers; utilization of foreign archives becomes indispensable. In this respect, the documents found in the Dodecanese (*Dodecanneso*) and Turkey (*Turchia*) folders of *Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri* (Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), in Rome, Italy, in which the records of the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese can be found in the form of the intelligence reports and the diplomatic correspondence, constitute the main structure of this dissertation, especially for the interwar period. Despite the abundance of the documents in the Italian Archives concerning the interwar period owing to the fact that the Dodecanese was bureaucratically tied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than the Ministry of Colonies, the dossiers regarding the Second World War are not sufficient. This is probably due to the specific condition of Italy, which signed armistice with the Allies in 1943, as well as the occupation of the Dodecanese by the Germans, who routinely burned documents in the occupied peninsulas. This necessitated more archival research, this time in the National Archives, in London, formerly known as Public Record Office. In this respect, the documents especially belonging to the Foreign Office, Prime Ministry, and the Cabinet, as well as the War Office, were used in this study.

Apart from these two archives, I conducted research in Turkey. The Republican Division of Prime Ministry of State Archives (*TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) in Ankara, despite its inadequacy, has intelligence documents regarding the southwestern Anatolia. However, it should be stated that these documents which the local authorities usually sent to Ankara, fell short of the intelligence reports the Italian archives have on the Turkish political and military circles.

In addition, I made an archival study in the Turkish General Staff (ATASE) based on two folders, *Ata-Zeybek*, focusing on the interwar period; and *İkinci Dünya Savaşı*, focusing on the Second World War. The documents of this institution, despite drawbacks similar to the Republican Archives, provided information about the visits of high-ranking military officials to southwestern Anatolia, intelligence about the islands, and military negotiations with the British during the Second World War. Last but not least, the digital collection of the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) was utilized especially for the talks about the Dodecanese among the Allied powers both during and after the Second World War.

As can be seen, this dissertation is based mainly on archival resources. Yet, primary resources also included excerpts from various newspapers, especially from *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Sabah*, *La Stampa*, *the New York Times*, and *Times*. While different time frames of these papers were utilized, other newspapers are also quoted in this study, taken mostly from the archival documents stated above and cited accordingly.

In addition to the primary ones, this work also benefits from secondary sources. I used the secondary sources mostly in dealing with the more general issues of the period that could not be separated from the topic of this dissertation, like the diplomatic and military history of the Mediterranean, Turkish politics, and Turkish foreign policy in general, and the history of the interwar period and Second World War. In this sense, it can be suggested that the broader history in this work, rather than the specific topic of the Dodecanese, depends mainly on the secondary sources. It is this methodology of dealing with various primary and secondary sources that could bring out this

dissertation, which aims at being one of the region-specific studies in Turkish foreign policy and filling a gap in the literature.²¹

Based on these assumptions and research, this dissertation is composed of eight chapters, including this introduction as well as the conclusion section. The next part reveals the historical background of the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Dodecanese Islands. This chapter's main aim is to show how these islands occupied a place in Ottoman diplomacy and politics beginning with the nineteenth century, which was the age of nationalism and imperialism. In this regard, not only the problems about the islands for the Ottomans, but also the attention of the Great Powers in the region began with the Greek uprising in 1821. This attention reached its peak with the attack of the Italians on the Dodecanese during the Tripolitanian War of 1911-1912.

Thereafter, the future of the islands became a topic of discussion in secret treaties and negotiations among the different powers of Europe until 1923, when the de facto sovereignty of the Italians turned into a de jure one. Between 1912 and 1923, Turkey, Italy, and Greece had claimed the islands, while the other European powers like Britain, France, and Russia were also involved in the matter. This chapter while focusing on these negotiations, also looks at how the Turkish mind perceived the islands and how these islands were used during war time, like the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and the Independence War.

²¹ In this respect, it is necessary to emphasize that when the archive of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is opened to research, new information in the shape of extending the scope or perhaps challenging the some facts of this dissertation will come into the daylight. Furthermore, in this way, the aforementioned comparative study focusing on both the Dodecanese and the northern Aegean Islands, which necessitates a thorough study also in the archive of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs at present, could be made.

The third chapter, which is called “On the Verge of the War,” looks at one of the most painful periods that the islands meant for the newly founded Republic. It argues that the formulation of the islands as the stepping stones of Italian expansionism in the Mediterranean turned the Dodecanese into one of the most important dynamics of Turkish foreign and security policy. Turkey, as a newly founded but isolated country dealing with various post-Lausanne diplomatic problems, was caught in the middle of various security threats, like the Mosul problem in the East and the island fortifications in the West. Therefore, how Turkey perceived and reacted to the excessive fortifications on the islands constitutes the topic of this section. It is argued that the fear of being attacked from the sea had an influence on Ankara’s both diplomatic decisions and security measures taken in the southwestern shores, manifesting an action-reaction chain in the issue. It is emphasized that this epoch was one of the most fragile periods of Turkish foreign policy since cooperation took place among Britain, Italy, and Greece, not allowing the relatively isolated Turks to seek diplomatic cooperation, but mainly to maintain security measures to defend the territories with limited resources in case of an attack.

The dynamics of the fourth chapter, on the other hand, differ from the third one. As a result of the change in the relationship between the abovementioned cooperation as well as the conditions of the European politics, the Italian attitude toward Turkey began to soften beginning with 1927. However, this *détente* in the bilateral relations did not indicate the culmination of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign policy. Instead, it introduced new issues regarding the islands, yet mostly based on the diplomatic negotiations rather than the military understanding of the previous epoch.

In this context, Chapter Four focuses on the negotiations related to the sovereignty of the islets around Kastellorizo, the demand for an economic convention by the Dodecanese administration, the effort to draw a maritime boundary between the islands and the Turkish mainland, and the problems involving the property matters of the islanders in Anatolia. In this section, it is argued that the problematic nature of the islands for Turkey stemmed not just from their militarization. Rather, even in the period of relative *détente*, Turkey had many issues to deal with about the islands in its foreign policy. This chapter is also important in designating that some recent problems that Turkey has experienced in the Aegean Archipelago have their roots in this period, asserting that they are neither unique to the post-1950s, nor to the Turkish-Greek relationship.

Even in the dynamics of the *détente* period, the parties achieved only the partition of the Kastellorizo Islets. Much discussed issues like the economic convention between Turkey and the Dodecanese or the effort of the Turks to determine the maritime borders between the islands and Anatolian coasts reached no conclusion. Meanwhile, clouds were gathering above Europe, which was advancing towards a full-scale war, leading to the change in the dynamics of the Aegean one more time.

Chapter Five of the dissertation examines the years leading up to the Second World War when the Dodecanese Islands were turned into one of the most important parameters of Turkish foreign and security policy. This chapter argues that Turkey's understanding of the Dodecanese in this period was influential in almost all steps and initiatives of Turkey during this time scale. In this sense, it should be emphasized that that the impact of the islands was similar to the dynamics shown in Chapter Three. But, the position of Turkey in the international arena was quite different in the late 1930s,

regarding the aforementioned isolation. Therefore, it is suggested in this chapter that Turkey sought to provide its security both via active foreign policy initiatives and via military undertakings. These initiatives, such as the Montreux Convention and the Turkish-British rapprochement which would expand into a tripartite pact at the end of the interwar period as well as the military preparations in coastal Anatolia are analyzed from this perspective.

When the Second World War broke out ultimately after the turbulent years of the interwar period, the significance of the Dodecanese did not simply fade away. Rather, it evolved into a much more complicated issue. Chapter Six discusses with the various angles of the matter. As it was stated above, by 1939, Turkey had constituted an alliance with Britain and France. This section, thus, while scrutinizing the place of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign policy in the war years, also examines how this alliance had an influence on the Dodecanese dynamic in Turkish foreign policy. It is shown that throughout the period between 1939 and 1940, the Allies planned an action against the Dodecanese with no concrete results.

Turkey announced its non-belligerency after the Italian entrance to the war in 1940 and did not change its position until the end of the period. The islands persisted to play an important role both in the Turkish understanding and in the relationship of Ankara with the Allied parties, because on the one hand the Axis powers surrounded the Turkey's Western coasts altogether, making Turkey vulnerable strategically, and on the other hand, the Allies desperately needed to open the Aegean Sea as well as to make Turkey belligerent. According to British, this belligerency may have been achieved once the Allies dominated the Archipelago. As a result, as this chapter emphasizes, the Dodecanese Islands remained on the table of negotiations with Turkey throughout the

war, arguing that the islands occupied an important place for Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War, along with other major security problems.

The meaning of the Dodecanese for Turkey during the Second World War cannot be restricted to the diplomatic negotiations or security related calculations. This chapter analyzes other issues like the refugee flux from the islands, which became another problematic issue for Turkey, and the humanitarian assistance that Turkey or the the Turkish mainland played an important role. In conclusion, Chapter Six deals with the different aspects of the Dodecanese Islands in Turkish security and diplomacy during the war years, suggesting that they were as problematic as they had been in the interwar period.

Towards the end of the war, another issue came into the agenda of the parties interested in the Aegean: the sovereignty of the Dodecanese. The issue had been discussed several times during the war, especially in terms of the repercussions of a possible Turkish action against the islands as well as a possible surrender of the region to Turkey. However, when the fate of the war seemed to end in favor of the Allies in the last year, the issue began to be discussed much more seriously. Chapter Seven examines the process involving the Dodecanese sovereignty, which was transferred to Greece in 1947. It is argued that despite the official stance of Turkey in terms of not having any territorial claims, the Turkish understanding on the islands, which had posed problems to Ankara since 1923, was the necessity of the transfer of at least some of the islands to Turkey since they belonged historically to Turkey and were close to the Anatolian coast from a security perspective, although Britain as well as the US had been in favour of Greek claims since the first years of the war.

It is important to note that the Turkish position was not indifferent to the islands, as is the general belief even today. Obviously, the earlier chapters of this work are proof that ignorance of Turkey about the region was not possible, especially considering how those islands impacted Turkish foreign policy and security understanding. In other words, Turkey sought ways to discuss the fate of the islands, at least in terms of their partition between Athens and Ankara. Yet, it is asserted that Turkish government could not insist on its Dodecanesian claims since it had other major foreign policy problems, like the Soviet Union, which had demanded bases from the Straits.

This part of dissertation suggests that Turkey, which was in desperate need of Western support balancing the Soviet threat to its territorial integrity, did not make any claims, because obviously neither Britain nor the US would back them. The Soviet involvement in the Dodecanese issue during the peace talks regarding the demand for bases by Moscow on the islands further complicated the issue for Turkey, which had been faced with a threat of another aggressive and more powerful state just near its shores again. Therefore, this chapter designates that how the Dodecanese occupied a problematic place once again in Turkish foreign policy, focusing on the diplomatic negotiation process over the sovereignty of the islands.

As could be seen from the content of the chapters and from the emphasis made until this point, this study basically targets a specific vacuum in the academic literature on Turkish foreign policy based on historical research. However, before passing through the chapters, it is necessary to mention some of the broader issues about the islands and the island-mainland relations that may assist in situating this dissertation within an international context, and more importantly, understanding that the problems Turkey experienced were not unexpected although every historical case carries its own

uniqueness for sure. In this sense, the aim of this dissertation is not to prove or reject the basic arguments of a field, like political geography, island studies, or the international relations in this case, but the arguments about the relationship between the small islands and the mainland or specific examples from the world would reflect the problematic nature of the islands throughout the world, transcending the regions or the periods.

Why are the political histories of the island geographies, especially the smaller ones, complex as Royle argues? This is one of the questions that the political geography and island studies, as a relatively recent academic discipline, try to answer. According to Sutton and Payne, small islands are associated with “openness, islandness, or enclaveness, resilience, weakness, and dependence.”²² Although these are the problems of small island geographies, their impacts on the surrounding environment, or sometimes a broader geography, are significant.

When Sutton and Payne’s characteristics are analyzed from the perspective of economy and commerce, it is seen that few of the small island geographies are self-sufficient; therefore, dependence is a way of being for these geographic entities.²³ Indeed, the economy of the Dodecanese showed a similar pattern in terms of economic self-sufficiency, which depended on the Turkish mainland in terms of economic and commercial activities. Once the islands were subjected to the sovereignty of a power different from the one of Asia Minor, from which they utilized in terms of commercial activities, fishing activities in the coastal zones, and also agricultural activities in the towns of the Southwestern Anatolia owing to their traditional practice of living in both coasts of the Aegean; this economic dependence of the Dodecanese on Anatolia turned

²² Paul Sutton and Anthony Payne, “Liliput Under the Threat: The Security Problems of Small Island and Enclave Developing States,” *Political Studies* 41(1993), p.582.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.590.

into a diplomatic problem in the interwar period due to closure of the coasts and Asia Minor to the Dodecanesians. That is why throughout the period that Turkey and Italy negotiated the maritime issues in the Aegean Sea, the administrator of the islands sought an economic treaty that would enable the islanders to practice fishing along the Turkish coasts or other commercial activities with Turkey, as would be seen in the Fourth Chapter.

The dependence and insularity of the islands, not only the Dodecanese, but also other small islands and island groups throughout the world, can be observed in a much more keen way during wartime. The history of the islands is linked to famine during the war years,²⁴ as a result of the blockade and the abovementioned lack of their economic self-sufficiency of these limited geographic entities. In this respect, the Dodecanese during the Second World War, analogous to the other island groups in the Aegean Archipelago, experienced similar dynamics of famine. Since the Dodecanese Islands were commercially dependent on Turkey, the blockade that both the Axis and the Allies implemented in the Aegean Sea during the war turned the hunger conditions in the islands into an acute problem with which Ankara had to deal from time to time.

When the geographic proximity of the region to the Turkish mainland is kept in mind, it is not surprising to see that famine and war conditions in the region led to migration from the Aegean to southwestern/western Anatolia, creating another problem that Turkey had to take care of, as will be shown in the section about the Second World War. Obviously, this situation constitutes another good example of the fact that islands, which have some shortcomings due to their size and isolation, can affect their relative

²⁴ A good example of this situation is narrated again based on the Aegean: Sheila Lecoer, *Mussolini's Greek Island: Fascism and the Italian Occupation of Syros in World War II* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009).

mainland areas,²⁵ sometimes being experienced on tough conditions. It is necessary to emphasize that this dissertation is mostly interested in those “effects” on the mainland; rather than the shortcomings itself. Yet, as should be noted, these effects were chiefly the result of the political geography of the region.

Actually, the problems around the commercial relations and migration were secondary issues for Turkey. The primary concern of Turkey about the region was directly related to the security threat that Ankara perceived from the islands throughout the war and interwar period. Actually, how Turkey felt about its territorial security regarding the Dodecanese was connected intimately to how the states had usually comprehended the islands.

In this respect, it should be underlined that the islands had turned into a target of colonialism especially beginning with the nineteenth century because of the geopolitical importance of those regions through which the states could practice their naval power, extend their areas of influence, and sometimes widen their commercial activities.²⁶ In other words, the motives of the states to capture the small islands were not an imperialistic end in themselves, but a means to expand further, with the utilization of these regions as bases. The inevitable result of both the occupation and militarization of those areas became the discomfort that the adjacent territories felt owing to the deployment of the expansionist powers right next to their lands. In this regard, the Turkish perturbation sometimes reaching hysteria in the interwar era is not surprising and cannot be simply attributed to a problematic past of occupation.

²⁵ Royle, *A Geography of Islands*, p.1.

²⁶ George H. Quester, “Trouble in the Islands: Defending the Micro-States,” *International Security* 8, no.2 (Fall 1983), p.162.

This position of Ankara was similar to that of Argentina, which was anxious about the British occupation of the Falkland Islands in the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean with strategic aims in 1833. Beginning with this date, the Falklands began to constitute a major problem in terms of the claims of Argentina, which had finally led to a war in 1982 between these two states, ending with the British victory.

Although the issue is discussed in terms of the economic value of the region nowadays, the main problem throughout the history of the archipelago has been the British insistence on keeping its military base in the South Atlantic while the Argentinians have emphasized their discomfort owing to the proximity of a military base near their mainland, held by a foreign power. The most recent incident over the region occurred in 2012 when Britain undertook a military activity on the islands and the Argentinian government declared that it would report the issue to the UN. Although London assured Buenos Aires that its activities were defensive in nature, the tough language between the parties persisted, showing that how islands with military bases continue to be a serious problem for the mainland countries throughout the world.

Other examples can be given within different contexts. For instance, Chile occupied the Easter Island of the Polynesian group in the nineteenth century based on both defensive and offensive excuses. On the one hand, Chilean government had tried to set up a seaward defense with this action on the grounds that the colonial powers were occupying the Pacific Islands, which would pose threat to the Chilean coasts in some way or another.²⁷ On the other hand, Chile, while fearing from an attack, also sought expansion in Latin America as the counterpart of Prussia in the region, believing that it

²⁷ J. Douglas Porteous, "The Annexation of Eastern Island: Geopolitics and Environmental Perception," *NS, Northsouth* 6, no.11 (1981), pp.70-71.

could achieve this through military bases, as formulated in the Easter Island.²⁸ The significance of Easter Island in the calculations of Chile was both because of the expansion of the colonial powers to other islands from a defensive point of view, and because of the aims to venture expansion in Latin America from an offensive point of view. As can be expected, the neighboring countries like Peru and Bolivia were worried about the action of Chile, which had already expanded at their expense in Latin America.²⁹

The common feature in those cases, including the topic of this study is the reaction of the coastal states to the occupation and/or militarization of the islands adjacent to their territories. This understanding contradicts with the general assumption of the island-mainland relations, which take granted that the islands are vulnerable vis-à-vis the mainland.³⁰ Actually, this assumption could be justified on the grounds that small islands are associated with powerlessness.³¹ Indeed, the majority of small islands are still controlled by the outsiders,³² because they usually are incapable of maintaining the defenses necessary to resist attack.³³

However, the main issue seems to be the fact that once the islands are occupied by a more powerful state different from the sovereignty of the closest mainland, the argument about the islands concerning their vulnerability in front of the mainland is rendered ineffective. Italy (and Germany later on) in the Dodecanese, Chile on the

²⁸ Ibid. p.69.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Elaine Stratford, Godfrey Baldocchino, Elizabeth Macmahon, Carol Farbotko, Andrew Harwood, "Envisioning the Archipelago," *Island Studies Journal* 6 no.2 (2011), p.116.

³¹ Stephen Royle, "Small Places like St Helena have Big Questions to Ask: The Inaugural Lecture of a Professor of Island Geography," *Island Studies Journal* 5, no.1 (2010), p.8.

³² Ibid.

³³ Sutton and Payne, p.583.

Easter Island, and Britain in the Falklands symbolize this condition for Turkey, Peru, and Argentina respectively, clarifying the matter that appears as if contradictory. It can be argued that the epoch after the 1950s, during which Turkey's relationship with the Aegean became problematic in terms of Turkish-Greek relations, could be analyzed based on relatively equal terms depending on the comparative power of Ankara and Athens regarding each other, especially compared to the period of this dissertation.

This vulnerability presumption about the islands despite its discrepancies, especially in terms of the relationship with the mainland territories, manifests itself more accurately during the times of war as it could be seen in the Second World War. Above, the isolation and famine conditions that the islands were faced during the war were discussed. But, apart from the economic and humanitarian conditions, the vulnerability of the islands to attacks in the periods of war also seems vital from the perspective of security. In this sense, the Italian and German occupation of the whole Aegean peninsula step by step during the Second World War became an important dynamic for Turkish foreign and security policy, as the Chapter Six argues. The strategic position of the islands, both the Dodecanese and the northern Aegean ones, in relation to the Balkans and the Middle East, turned the region into a place of occupation and clash during the war as a result of which Ankara felt disturbed by the developments. While the Axis powers totally blocked the western coasts of Turkey in 1941, Ankara also worried that the Germans might consider crossing Anatolia via Thrace, and that islands that would be used as stepping stones, to reach the Middle East.

Ankara was justifiable in its concerns over the islands because throughout the world during the war, strategically located islands were regarded as both military bases for defensive purposes and stepping stones to the enemy mainlands. Hitler's decision to

attack the Channel Islands close to the French coasts of Normandy, despite Churchill's consideration of the region's strategic features as unworthy to defend, was carrying an aim to protect the Western European edge of the Nazi push that had already swept over France.³⁴ But the only combat scene that involved islands did not take place in Europe. The entrance of US into the Second World War was a result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a US military base in the Hawaii Islands. The Japanese assaulted the island as part of their military calculations that once the island was occupied as a starting point, the war in the Pacific could have been won owing to its strategic location.³⁵

The response of the US in the Pacific to the Japan was a strategy again based on islands, called "island-hopping." With this strategy, the US tried to defeat Japan by occupying the islands in the Pacific step by step, in other words, by turning each occupied island into a base in order to attack the adjacent one, rather than waging a frontal war.³⁶ The US, while fighting over the islands in the Pacific, also had to take another island region into consideration throughout the war from a defensive point of view: the Caribbean Islands. The US paid attention to these islands since they were close to the Panama Canal which was critical for the American war strategy and therefore could have been assaulted by the Axis U-boats.³⁷

³⁴ Hitler pursued a significant fortification project in the Channel Islands, which had been demilitarized by the British, in order not to lose them. Edward P. F. Rose, "Specialist Maps of the Channel Islands Prepared by German Military Geologists during the Second World War: German Expertise Deployed on British Terrain," *The Cartographic Journal* 42, no.2 (September 2005), pp.111-112.

³⁵ Angelo N. Caravaggio, "'Winning' the Pacific War: The Masterful Strategy of Commander Minoru Genda," *Naval War College Review* 67, no.1 (Winter 2014), p.86.

³⁶ For more information about the formulation of the strategy see Robert W. Bergstrom, "A Former Naval Officer Asserts General Douglas Macarthur Was Wrongly Credited with America's Island-Hopping Strategy," *World War II* 13, no.7 (1999), p.58.

³⁷ Kristen Stromberg Childers, "The Second World War as a Watershed in the French Caribbean," *Atlantic Studies* 9, no.4 (2012), p.412; Rodriguez Beruff, "Puerto Rico and the

The strategic position of the islands vis-à-vis the important regions leave them vulnerable to occupation during war times. The main issue that this work scrutinizes is how this inclination was reflected in the Dodecanese on the one hand, and how these reflections influenced the Turkish mainland, on the other hand. When the abovementioned cases are kept in mind from the perspective of military strategy, the Turkish position towards the Dodecanese at the beginning of the war in terms of the occupation plans made with the Allies, the influence that the closure of the Aegean with the Axis dominance in the Archipelago had on the Turkish stance, and the attention of the British to the region due to the location of the islands to the key points in the Near East present a much broader understanding.

The problems that islands pose to mainland geographies cannot be restricted to military fortifications, war, occupation, economic dependence, and migration. Another significant issue is disputed sovereignty: Thus, the maritime boundaries in regions full of islands. As was suggested above, the consideration of the states about islands was geostrategic in character during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the security and strategy dynamic of the island sovereignties continues today, another dimension about islands has emerged. Nowadays, disputes and claims on islands have also been attached to the economic gains that an island can contribute to a country. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which gives a sovereign state the right to the exploration and use of resources in the sea within the two hundred miles from the

Caribbean in U.S. Strategic Debate on the Eve of the Second World War,” *Revista Mexicana Del Caribe* 1, no. 2 (December 1996), p.56.

baselines,³⁸ has been the bases of the majority of disputes about island sovereignties and maritime boundaries as much as the possible geopolitical gains.

Islands, especially those in the South China Sea, constitute a good understanding about how these geographies lead to problems between states, much as tension, diplomatic negotiation processes, or arbitration. The best known cases are the Spratly Islands, claimed by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines; the Paracel Islands, claimed by China and Vietnam; and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, claimed by China and Japan.³⁹ As can be guessed, all of these islands are located in strategic positions both militarily and commercially as they are on the routes of the maritime traffic, and are suspected of having rich natural resources within their environments, such as oil and natural gas.⁴⁰ While these problems lead to flare ups of tension occasionally, the fact that the US pays attention to conflicts, especially the one between China and Japan,⁴¹ displays that the traditional alliances still survive in the region on the one hand, and strategic islands are still in the realm of great power politics on the other hand. This fact also could be observed in the stance of Russia, which further escalates the tension in the

³⁸ The Exclusive Economic Zone is described by the “UNCLOS, United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea,” 1982, Part V. For more information, see http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm (accessed August 30, 2014).

³⁹ For more information and an interactive map for the disputes, see Council on Foreign Relations “China’s Maritime Disputes,” <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/chinas-maritime-disputes/p31345#/?cid> (accessed September 1, 2014).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This US attention to issue reached at a point that Obama administration had made an explanation about an American aid to the Japan in case of a conflict between the parties in 2014. *The Guardian*, “Obama says US will defend Japan in island dispute with China” (24 April 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/24/obama-in-japan-backs-status-quo-in-island-dispute-with-china> (accessed September 1, 2014).

region through high-ranking visits to the Kuril Islands,⁴² which constitute another island dispute in the region between Russia and Japan, in the peak points of the hostility over Senkaku.

If the fact that the struggles over the islands are related directly to security, maritime borders, territorial waters, airspace and EEZ is kept in mind, the disputes in almost every archipelagic region become understandable. Similar examples also could be observed in the Aegean Archipelago itself depending on these notions. In this respect, it should be emphasized that despite the fact that there are not any major disputes in the Aegean Sea in terms of the islands; the islets and the rocks dependent on these islands are still being contested by both Turkey and Greece, sometimes leading to the crises, like the one of Kardak (Imia) in the 1990s. Since the sovereignty of certain areas has not been determined yet, as the Turkish officials prefer to call grey zones, the maritime boundaries in the Aegean Sea remain vague from the delta of Meriç (Evros) to the Dodecanese Islands.⁴³

The island disputes together with related notions like delimitation or territorial waters are global phenomena that are neither unique to the Aegean Sea, nor restricted to any period. All of these issues like the islet claims of Turkey and Italy in the interwar period, the negotiations about the maritime delimitation between Anatolia and the Dodecanese, the stances over the territorial waters norm of the day, as well as the larger issue of the transfer of the islands to Greece in the postwar period show that such problems are intrinsic to island geographies transcending the time periods. However, it

⁴² Joyman Lee, "Senkaku/Diaoyu: Islands of Conflict," *History Today* 61, no.5 (2011), <http://www.historytoday.com/joyman-lee/senkakudiaoyu-islands-conflict> (accessed September 1, 2014).

⁴³ Alexis Heraclides, *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the Aegean, Imagined Enemies* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.209.

also should be emphasized that in past periods some issues were much more limited and vague in character. For instance, the international rules about the territorial waters and airspace were under development at that time and even the islets between the islands and the Turkish mainland were hardly known since the cartographic studies fell short of the needs. Likewise, although today's phenomenon of EEZ did not exist in the 1930s, Turkey's efforts to achieve sovereignty of the certain islets and to draw a boundary between the Anatolian coasts and the Dodecanese had also economic drives like the determination of the areas regarding fishing and animal grazing rights as did the counterparty, in addition to military reasons.

The place of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy presents a striking narrative, showing how small islands can pose political, military, legal, and economic problems to Turkey. The examples cited above were given to show that apart from being an historical narrative of a period which was important to Turkish understanding, this dissertation also indicates a broader phenomenon that the islands, which are problematic endogenously, form difficulties for the closest mainland, sometimes disproportionately to their sizes as in this case, and constitute problems between states. Thus, the broader implication of this study is that the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy generates another example of how the archipelagic regions create complex political histories.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DODECANESE ISLANDS QUESTION

Among all the seven island groups in the Aegean Sea, the Dodecanese, which is also known as the Southern Sporades, is geographically closest to Asia Minor. This geography, which assumes the islands as the extension of Asia Minor, has led to constant intercourse between the shores as well as the sharing of a common culture by these two entities since prehistory.⁴⁴ One of the most significant results of this interaction is that the history of the Dodecanese has both influenced the political, economic, and social history of Asia Minor, and has been influenced by the mainland in all these respects at the same time.

Apart from the particular relationship between the islands and Asia Minor, the geographic position of the islands, which lies along a crucial route in the Eastern Mediterranean, has induced a problematic political history for the Dodecanese, since their strategic importance rendered them a subject of campaigns, diplomatic struggles, and mutual rivalries throughout the ages. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the imperialist clashes between the European powers reached a peak point, were not exceptions in this regard.

As could be expected, all these campaigns and struggles in the region affected both Asia Minor and the political power dominant in this geography. From this point of

⁴⁴ E. M. Melas, "The Dodecanese and W. Anatolia in Prehistory: Interrelationships, Ethnicity and Political Geography," *Anatolian Studies* 38 (1988), p.109.

view, this chapter examines the historical phase that turned the Dodecanese Islands into an international problem in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that was discussed at European conferences and in secret meetings in order to show how these islands affected the Ottoman Empire's stance and politics in a period before the one of this study. In other words, this part will demonstrate the time at which these islands began to occupy a place in Turkish diplomacy and strategy that continues today. However, before jumping to the nineteenth century directly, it is necessary to touch briefly upon the earlier periods in order to designate the major milestones in Dodecanesian history.

The Dodecanese Islands before the Ottomans

Belen writes that throughout history, the state that is able to hold both sides of the Aegean is also able to possess the whole region and can even found empires.⁴⁵ Putting aside the general term "Aegean," even particularly the Dodecanese held, and still holds, strategic importance both concerning the Anatolia, and concerning the Eastern Mediterranean. This strategic position within the triangle of Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt increased the military and political significance of these islands as well as what Volonakis writes "made them a great social and commercial centres and an emporium of wealth."⁴⁶ Therefore, from antique times they have been the scene of interest and of battle between powerful states.

⁴⁵ Necdet Belen, *Ege Denizi ve Ege Adaları* (İstanbul: Harp Akademileri Basımevi, 1995), p.41.

⁴⁶ Michael D. Volonakis, *The Island of Roses and Her Eleven Sisters: or The Dodecanese from the Earliest Time down to the Present Day* (London: Macmillan and Co., limited, 1922), p.85.

The Minoans, Mycenaeans, and Dorians ruled the Dodecanese Islands, respectively in the pre-archaic and archaic period, when the islands, together with the cities of Asia Minor, prospered with trade.⁴⁷ In the classical period, subsequently, the islands changed hands several times between the Persians and the Greeks until the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great expanded throughout the Mediterranean. After the Macedonian domination, the islands passed under the control of the Roman Empire and in the fourth century, with the division of the empire, it remained under Eastern rule. Even if the period under the Roman rule could be regarded as a relatively stable era in terms of unchanging sovereignty, it is known that due to their location and prosperity, the islands were exposed to a large number of attacks,⁴⁸ such as those by the Persians, Saracens, and Venetians. Nevertheless, despite the various attacks and short-lived seizures of the islands by these powers, they remained under the formal sovereignty of the Byzantium Empire.

However, although the Byzantine rule continued, the islands were administered by an assigned Genovese governor in the thirteenth century. Genovese families that had established commercial and political bonds with Rhodes successfully before the fourteenth century regarded the Dodecanese as a door opening to the East and desired Latin domination on the islands.⁴⁹ Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the Knights Hospitaller⁵⁰ seized the Dodecanese Islands with the help of these Genovese families,

⁴⁷ For a more detailed history of the region in this period see N. G. L. Hammond, *Studies in Greek History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

⁴⁸ Charles Douglas Booth and Isabelle Bridge Booth, *Italy's Aegean Possessions* (London: Arrowsmith, 1928), p.25.

⁴⁹ Anthony Lutrell, *The Hospitaller State on Rhodes and its Western Provinces, 1306-1462* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate/Variorum, 1999), p.738.

⁵⁰ Knights of Hospitaller were secret order known as the Knights of Jerusalem. After the failure of the Crusaders and the loss of Jerusalem, they moved to Syria and Cyprus respectively. In

ending the Byzantine era. The Knights consolidated their power over most of the islands by the first decades of the fourteenth century.

The rise of the Ottoman power changed the existing balance of power in the Mediterranean with the conquest of Egypt by the Selim I, and the Ottoman attacks on and seizure of the Aegean Islands step by step.⁵¹ Until the end of 1522, when the Ottomans conquered the Rhodes, the Knights of Rhodes and the Ottomans clashed with each other within the southern side of the Aegean in order to prove supremacy in the area. But, despite the existence of the reciprocal hostilities between these two powers, the geographic condition of the islands that Nicolas Vatin describes as an “Oriental labyrinth” necessitating daily economic intercourses with Egypt and Asia Minor,⁵² led to steady commercial and political relations between the islands and the mainland southwestern Anatolia in a constant way.⁵³

Actually, the necessity for the daily economic relations despite the existence of political and military tension was not unique to the medieval period. Instead, it was a commonplace situation in terms of the relations between Asia Minor and Dodecanese Islands, also for the whole period that this dissertation analyzes. This characteristic of the Dodecanese Islands is not surprising especially when the ordinary perception of the islands as vulnerable, fragile, problematic, and economically dependent on the mainland as the existing island literature puts forward, is kept in mind.⁵⁴ In terms of the sixteenth century, however, this situation that seems as if quasi contradictory changed with the

1306, they conquered Rhodes and some of the Dodecanese Islands, moved their order to Rhodes, and renamed the order the Knights of Rhodes. Today, they are known as the Knights of Malta, where they moved after the Ottoman takeover of Rhodes in 1522.

⁵¹ Vatin, pp.4-5.

⁵² Ibid., p.5.

⁵³ Ibid., p.21.

⁵⁴ Elaine Stratford et al., p.116.

Ottoman seizure of Rhodes in 1522 after which the separation of the islands from the mainland with regard to the political sovereignty came to an end.

From Stability to Occupation: The Dodecanese under Ottoman Rule

When the Ottomans conquered the Dodecanese Islands, a more or less uninterrupted four-century-period began for the region. Various accounts of the Dodecanese which deal with this period give different and sometimes contradictory information about the Ottoman rule of the islands. For instance, while Nicolas Vatin states that after the Ottoman seizure, the islands turned into a province as ordinary as any other of the empire due to the cutting of any bonds with Europe and to the incompetence of the policy makers,⁵⁵ Cemalettin Taşkıran states that with the Ottoman dominance in the Aegean, a vivid commercial life and a steady economic development started due to the islanders' novel right to undertake agriculture in western Anatolia in addition to receiving support from the Ottoman state both for the sponge-diving off Symi Island and for the export of sponge products to Europe.⁵⁶ Likewise, Turkish authors regard the tax exemption the islanders enjoyed, in addition to the much debated "tolerance" regime of the Ottomans with regard to the free practice of the Orthodox religion and schooling in the Greek language, as the reasons for the development of and the peace on the islands.⁵⁷

Greek authors and the activists who sought to unite the islands with Greece during the interwar years tend to qualify the period as one of "barbaric rule," yet better

⁵⁵ Vatin, p.358.

⁵⁶ Taşkıran, *Oniki Ada'nın Dünü ve Bugünü*, p.62.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.59., and Örenç, p.555.

than the Italian one, owing to the relative autonomy that the Ottomans provided.⁵⁸ As can be anticipated, such evaluations can be multiplied in every aspect of the Ottoman period on the islands and chiefly vary according to the ideological orientation of the author. Whatever the characteristics of this reign were, it was a reality that a kind of stability prevailed on the islands, at least with regard to the unchanging sovereignty within a long time as compared to previous epochs summarized briefly above. But, the nineteenth century represents a peculiarity in this long stable rule of the Ottomans in the region.

The nineteenth century is a divergent period in the Ottoman history. The empire was going through a political and economic transformation simultaneously with the speed-up of the decay in its international politics, not being these two processes mutually exclusive. First of all, as an empire, one of the most important characteristics of which was territorial expansion, the Ottomans had already been trying to cope with the territorial losses as a result of the wars, especially with Austria or the Tsarist Russia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, this state of affairs had become more complicated owing to ideologies like the nationalism that the French Revolution introduced to the world. As Erik Jan Zürcher states, “during the nineteenth century, the growth of nationalism, first in the Balkans and later also in the Asiatic provinces, was to prove the most important factor in the destruction of the Ottoman state.”⁵⁹

The Ottoman Empire experienced a political transformation at the same time with these national uprisings and territorial losses, as stated above. This process started

⁵⁸ See Demetrius Caclamanos, “The Dodecanese: Past and Future,” *Contemporary Review* 160 (July-December 1941), pp.14-44.

⁵⁹ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.27.

with the modernization of the military in order to deal with the aforementioned territorial shrink, and step by step evolved into a political transformation; in other words, the modernization process of the state apparatus, with both the interaction with and the interference of European powers.⁶⁰ It should be added that all of these developments were affected by and also affected the economic transition within the empire, the economic infrastructure of which coalesced into the capitalist world economy during the same century.⁶¹ When all these factors are kept in mind, the nineteenth century seems really to have been the “longest” one for the history of the empire as Ortaylı calls.⁶²

It is possible to observe this transformation process also in the Dodecanese Islands, as in other provinces of the empire.⁶³ But, the reflections of the nineteenth century on the Dodecanese especially with regard to the aforementioned issues of nationalism and nationalist uprisings seem to have been more significant than the influences of the state modernization in the region, particularly for the topic of this dissertation. That is to say, those islands were not an exception in the empire swept by nationalist uprisings, but participated in the spirit of the time, putting the Ottoman rule on the islands in a fragile position.

The riot in the Dodecanese was not an event in itself; on the contrary, it occurred as a part of the Greek rebellion that broke out in 1821. Obviously, when the nature of the

⁶⁰ For more information about the nineteenth century Ottoman modernization process, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*; and Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964).

⁶¹ For more information about the nineteenth century Ottoman economy, see Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme (1820-1913)* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomi ve Toplumsal Vakfı, 1994); and Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶² İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 1983).

⁶³ In order to see the pieces of the nineteenth century Ottoman modernization process in the Dodecanese, see Örenç.

rebellion and the demographic features of the islands are kept in mind, it is not surprising to see the spread of the riot down to the southeastern part of the Aegean.⁶⁴ In this respect, the local Orthodox population of the islands joined the Greek rebellion and in a short span of time, the majority of the Aegean Islands had declared their independence. In addition to the participation of the islands in the uprising, in order to be able to gain their independence, the islanders also sent soldiers to the Greek mainland to help their “motherland.”

In this sense, it is not a coincidence that the historians of Greece emphasize the substantial role that the islands played during the Greek independence process.⁶⁵ Yet, despite their declaration of independence and the role that they played during the rebellion, the Dodecanese Islands did not become a part of the Greek Kingdom founded after the war. Almost all the powers that were important for the European balance of power of the time had been involved in the Greek War of Independence. The use of the army of Mehmet Ali Pasha of Egypt, the support of Russia and Britain for the Greeks, and eventually the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire had led to the internationalization of the problem. In this respect, the Great Powers also had determined the abovementioned fate of the Dodecanese, in terms of their not being a part of independent Greece.

⁶⁴ For example, according to the 1831 population census results, in Rhodes total number of men was 10,552. Only 3100 people were Muslim. The majority of the population was non-Muslim, specifically Orthodox Greek, but there were also small numbers of Jews. These numbers are taken from Örenç, pp.201-203.

⁶⁵ For example, Nicholas Doumanis, *A History of Greece* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.176; and Ronald John Lagoe, *Greece and the Great Powers: The Question of the Aegean Islands, 1912-1914* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Microfilms, 1976), p.20.

On 16 November 1828, Britain, France, and Russia declared to the Sublime Porte that they had taken Morea, the Cyclades, and the Dodecanese under their auspices and that their future would have been decided in the subsequent days.⁶⁶ It was true that Britain and France had supported Greece, but they had drawn the Greek borders according to the political and military developments of the time. That is to say, after the Turkish-Russian War of 1829, the British had feared from the ambition of Russia in the Middle East and the power of the Tsar on Greece. The British concerns about the possibility of Russian dominance over Athens led to a smaller Greece than the one expected,⁶⁷ leaving the Dodecanese outside of the borders of modern Greece.

It is necessary to emphasize that even if the London Protocol of 1830 had already set forth the restoration of the islands to the Ottoman Empire as a result of the British strategy vis-à-vis Russia, some authors also assert that it was Greece that exchanged the Dodecanese Islands, which were supposed to be under Greek sovereignty according to the European plans, with Euboea due to its proximity to the Greek mainland.⁶⁸ Whether it was the decision of the European powers, especially the British understanding, or the result of an exchange process, when Greece gained its independence, the Dodecanese remained a part of the Ottoman Empire. The islands were, however, bestowed special consular offices in several European cities.⁶⁹ Even if Istanbul would challenge this privileged position of the islands in the subsequent periods, like the one of the Committee of Union and Progress, the status of the Dodecanese would remain more or

⁶⁶ Yavuz, p.17.

⁶⁷ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.30.

⁶⁸ Caclamanos, p.14.

⁶⁹ Skevos Zervos, *White Book: The Dodecanese: Resolution and Documents Concerning the Dodecanese, 1912-1919* (Tennessee: Nabu Press, 2010), p.10.

less same until the total loss of the region.⁷⁰ This loss, on the other hand, would be one of the most important turning points of the Dodecanesian history that would come with the Tripolitanian War between the Ottoman Empire and Italy which broke out in 1911.

As stated above, the Ottomans dealt with nationalist uprisings throughout the nineteenth century. Yet, internal uprisings were not the sole pattern for losing territory. The colonial competition among the European powers also had direct influences for the Ottoman state in a way that in addition to their direct involvement in the rebellions, these powers did not abstain from occupying Turkish territories. The second half of the nineteenth century, also had become a scene of the bargaining process for these colonial ambitions with which the European states tried to reach an agreement for the partition of the territories specifically including the ones of the Ottoman Empire, despite the fact that its territorial integrity had been guaranteed in the Paris Conference of 1856. These were the decades leading to the First World War that saw the formation of the Triple Alliance and Entente based on territorial interests.

In this atmosphere, Italy, which had completed its national unity as a latecomer, occupied a particular place because on the one hand it was regarded as one of the Great Powers of Europe, yet on the other, it was inferior to the other states of this group in terms of its military power, economic strength, and colonial possessions.⁷¹ Therefore, it was no coincidence that Italy began to formulate colonial targets in order to gain a “real” great power status. This was one of the reasons for the war over Tripoli. In this respect, although the first choice of Italy was Tunisia, instead of Libya, because of its proximity to Italy and suitable destination for emigration with which Italy had intense economic

⁷⁰ Yavuz, pp.18-19.

⁷¹ Richard Bosworth, “Britain and Italy’s Acquisition of the Dodecanese, 1912-1915,” *The Historical Journal* 13, no.4 (December 1970), p.683.

and commercial linkages,⁷² Tunis became a French protectorate in 1881, which had greatly disappointed Italy. Thereafter, other European powers tried to direct the colonial ambitions of Italy towards Libya. Actually, they both accepted the French action in Tunisia and encouraged Italy to seize Libya at the same time, in order not to alienate Rome in an environment where the fragile inter-European balance was important.

Thus, in September 1911, after a brief period of diplomacy, Italy landed troops in Tripoli and Benghazi, declaring war on the Ottoman Empire. However, the dreams of the Italians in terms of absolute victory in a short span failed. On the contrary, the resistance of the locals together with the volunteer officers of the Ottoman army was so strong that after a couple of months, Italy sought a remedy to the Libyan War, which had actually turned into a defense rather than an offense for them.⁷³ The available solution to Italy was to spread the war to the Eastern Mediterranean, and specifically to the Aegean Sea, although this meant the further internationalization of the issue due to the possible intervention of the European states to whom the Italians had promised not to expand the war to other fronts before their attack to Tripoli.⁷⁴ Indeed, similar to the worries of the Europeans, the concern of the Ottomans beginning from the first month of the clash was also the expansion of war to the Aegean,⁷⁵ due to the connection of this sea with the Straits, in other words, with Istanbul.

⁷² Hale Şıvgın, *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve 1911–1912 Türk-İtalyan İlişkileri: Trablusgarp Savaşı'nda Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'le İlgili Bazı Belgeler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), p.2.

⁷³ Timothy Winston Childs, *Trablusgarp Savaşı: Türk-İtalyan Diplomatik İlişkileri (1911-1912)* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), pp.108-109.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.91.

Although the first action of the Italians outside Tripoli came with the bombardment of Beirut, which brought about protests from other European powers,⁷⁶ the preparations of an Aegean campaign led to broader concerns due to the existing plans of the Sublime Porte, which declared that it would close the Straits to foreign ships, expel Italian citizens from the Ottoman soil, and lay mines in the Dardanelles in case of an attack.⁷⁷ As a result of these diplomatic and military steps that Turks were prepared to take, Britain tried to persuade the other powers to dissuade Italy from an Aegean campaign targeting the Dardanelles and the islands,⁷⁸ despite the fact that Italian government emphasized its rights about the freedom of action in the region.⁷⁹

In this diplomatically complicated situation, Italy finally decided to take action against the Dardanelles and some of the Aegean Islands in April 1912. The day that the Dardanelles was being attacked, the Sublime Porte was also communicating the Italian offensive to the Samos (Sisam) Island.⁸⁰ Together with those attacks, Italy also destroyed the telegraph cables in the Aegean that provided communication between Asia Minor and the islands.⁸¹ For this reason, the course of events, especially in terms of the fate of the islands, reached the Ottoman state late throughout the Aegean campaign, sometimes coming from other countries via their consular representatives.

During the first days of the campaign, it became obvious that the Ottoman navy was stuck in the Dardanelles while the Italians became the sole dominant power in the

⁷⁶ Bilal N. Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu: Belgeler (1912-1913)*, vol.1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), p.17.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.19, p.44.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.16.

⁷⁹ *La Stampa*, 21 April 1912.

⁸⁰ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p. 54.

⁸¹ İsmail Kurtcephe, *Türk-İtalyan İlişkileri (1911-1916)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p.120.

Aegean. The Italian strategy was to occupy certain islands primarily based on their geographic and military values. For instance, one of the first occupied islands of the Dodecanese was Astropalia (Stampalia), since it had important harbors that not only constituted a natural base for the navy, but also permitted an efficient action for the repression of the contraband of war.⁸² Likewise, although the island of Lemnos in the northern part of the Aegean was not totally occupied, the strategic bay of Mudros was seized over in order to be used for further action.⁸³

With these military bases, the Italian navy consolidated its dominant position in the Aegean from the south to the north and directed the bombardments in the region. It is necessary to emphasize that all the Western shores of Anatolia were vulnerable to the Italian attacks that were directed from the sea. While the areas like Ayvalık, Çeşme, and Marmaris had already been attacked, the threat of an offensive against the important Western cities like İzmir was also being discussed.⁸⁴ The Italian press was not exaggerating while it was emphasizing the panic in the Aegean towns.⁸⁵ The situation in the Aegean coasts in 1912 constitutes a good example of how these little islands had threatened the security of the mainland.

After the first days of the campaign, which predominantly dealt with the northern Aegean, the occupation of the Dodecanese began. The capture of these islands had the same logic with the Dardanelles bombardment, which had aimed at forcing Istanbul to sign a peace treaty that would cede Tripoli to Italy. Italy completed the occupation of all Dodecanese without encountering a resistance with the exception of Rhodes apart from

⁸² *La Stampa*, 24 April 1912. “Contraband of War” is a term in international law that refers to a belligerent’s right to prevent an enemy from receiving items that provide support for war.

⁸³ *La Stampa*, 24 April 1912.

⁸⁴ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p.74.

⁸⁵ *La Stampa*, 23 April 1912.

which a considerable Ottoman land force did not exist in the region.⁸⁶ In addition to the lack of land armies to defend the Dodecanese, the Ottoman navy was unable to sail in the Aegean as well, due to its imprisonment in the Dardanelles in May 1912. The islands were left to their own destiny without any concrete help.

During the occupation, the Ottoman officials were taken as prisoners of war,⁸⁷ and the Italian flag was hoisted above the public buildings. As stated above, news of a great majority of these developments reached Istanbul very late due to the disrupted communication, either through surveillance carried out from the Anatolian shores⁸⁸ or through the diplomatic missions. However, despite the delay, the results of the news were so influential that the whole Europe began to discuss the issue at the first minute. That is to say, the Aegean issue on the basis of the Dodecanese entered a novel phase during which international meetings, secret agreements, and diplomatic dilemmas dominated the agenda, as they would until the Lausanne Treaty in 1923.

Occupied Temporarily or Gained Permanently? The Vague Status of the Dodecanese Islands until the End of the First World War

In May 1912, the Dodecanese Islands were important for three reasons. First, they were important for the security of Anatolia and the Dardanelles, as they had always been and always would be, although the Ottoman Empire did not have any ability to take them back in that year. Second, they were significant for the future of Italy in Libya since they were regarded as a diplomatic trump card for the settlement of the region in favor of

⁸⁶ İdris Bostan and Ali Kurumahmut, *Trablusgarb ve Balkan Harplerinde İşgal Edilen Ege Adaları ve İşgal Telgrafları* (Ankara: Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüdler Milli Komitesi, 2003), p.xii.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.50.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.xii.

Rome. Last, they were influential for European politics because, as Britain stated, the geographic position of these islands enabled their sovereign powers to control the Asia Minor, Dardanelles, and even the Black Sea as well as to pose threat to the Eastern Mediterranean, specifically to Egypt.⁸⁹

Therefore, especially for Britain, hoping to continue its eastern hegemony, and for France, competing with the naval power of Italy in the Mediterranean, the status-quo in the Aegean in terms of the sovereignty of a power comparatively weaker was the best option. The only power that explicitly supported the actions of Italy throughout the process was Russia,⁹⁰ both due to the traditional enmity with the Ottomans and the competition with other European powers. Therefore, when the Austrians stated that Italian seizure of the islands would complicate the international situation with regard to the stance of the European powers,⁹¹ they were partly right because the issue had confused European politics indeed, yet without leading to a major crash among the states.

Obviously, the initial declarations of Italy in terms of the impermanency of its occupation,⁹² as well as the efforts of the British officials not to alienate either Rome or Istanbul prevented, or at least postponed, any direct intervention into issue until the end of the war,⁹³ with only one exception. This exception had come with the rumors about a possible Italian occupation of the northern Aegean Islands against which the Ottomans declared to whole world that it would reclose the Straits to all powers in such an

⁸⁹ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p.203.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.166.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.137-38.

⁹² Ibid., p.143.

⁹³ Bosworth, "Britain and Italy's Acquisition of the Dodecanese," p.689.

occasion.⁹⁴ Only after this threat the powers intervened into the situation on behalf of the Ottomans⁹⁵ in order not to be exposed to a commercial loss owing to the closure of the Straits. However, regardless of the position or the involvement of the Great Powers, it is possible to argue that every single player of the European arena was concerned with the future of the Aegean Sea. Further developments in the Balkans made the situation more complicated in this geography.

Peace negotiations to end the Tripolitanian War had been attempted several times between the Ottomans and Italians beginning from July 1912 without much success. But, in September, it was obvious that the Ottomans had to accelerate the process owing to the fact that Balkan states were mobilizing their troops in order to be used against the Ottoman territory. Even in the first days of October, in which the Balkan Wars began, the negotiations between the sides still continued in a way that the Italians were threatening the Ottomans with sending the navy to the Aegean again since Turkish officials refused the Italian terms.⁹⁶

Yet, since the situation in the Balkans necessitated an urgent peace, ten days after the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, Turkey reluctantly concluded the peace with Italy, which is known as Ouchy or the First Lausanne Treaty. According to the second article of this treaty, Italy promised to withdraw its troops from the Dodecanese Islands immediately following departure of the Ottoman civil and military officials and troops from Tripoli and Cyrenaica.⁹⁷ In addition, on 16 October, the Sublime Porte announced a decree according to which an administrative and judicial reforms had been promised to

⁹⁴ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p.142.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.151.

⁹⁶ Childs, p.248.

⁹⁷ For the full text of the Treaty, see *ibid.*, pp.279-283.

the islands that would be implemented regardless of religion and sect.⁹⁸ The Italians, though not in a written form, promised that they would not disturb the Ottoman navy in the southern Aegean.⁹⁹

By the time the Ouchy Treaty was signed, it was not thought that Italy had an intention of holding the islands, based on the commitments, like the conditional withdrawal. However, in a short span of time, it became obvious that not only the temporary nature of the Italian occupation in the Dodecanese, but also the situation in the Aegean Sea were far from certain. The outburst of the Balkan Wars complicated the situation further. In the first phase of the war, the Ottomans were defeated in all fronts to an extent that Balkan armies came to the doors of the capital city after occupying the former capital Edirne, substantially due to the lack of efficient military power as well as to the problems in the army.¹⁰⁰

The situation in the Aegean was not different. Since the most powerful navy among the Balkan countries belonged to Greece in terms of its quality and quantity at the time of the battle,¹⁰¹ this navy was given the important duty of imposing a blockade at the mouth of the Dardanelles, and on the shores of Asia Minor in order to impede the Ottoman army from sending help and war supplies from the Izmir region to the Thracian shores.¹⁰² To achieve this aim, Greece began to land armies on certain northern Aegean islands one by one with the beginning of the war. The Greek navy had already made the necessary explorations around the islands at nights several months earlier and had seen

⁹⁸ For the full text of this Decree, see *ibid.*, p.277.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁰⁰ Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp.204-205.

¹⁰¹ Yavuz, p.24.

¹⁰² Richard C. Hall, *Balkan Savaşları 1912-1912, I. Dünya Savaşı'nın Provası* (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2003), pp. 85-86.

the military weakness of the region.¹⁰³ Therefore, it was not surprising to see that by the first months of the war, the Greeks had captured majority of the strategic islands in the northern Aegean, such as Bozcaada (Tenedos), Gökçeada (İmroz), Semadirek (Samothraki), Taşoz (Tasos), Limni (Lemnos), Midilli (Lesvos), and Sakız (Chios). With the seizure of these islands, the Greeks had reached at their ends, especially with the possession of Limni, Bozcaada, and Gökçeada; the Ottoman navy could not cleave the blockade in the Dardanelles throughout the war.¹⁰⁴

With the Balkan Wars, the situation in the Aegean had become much more troublesome, because while the Dodecanese was under Italian occupation, Greece was controlling the northern Aegean islands although the western Anatolian coast was under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. This period initiated a new epoch, especially in terms of the problematic island-mainland relations that would last the recent day, based on the separate sovereignties in the Aegean islands and in Asia Minor.

It was evident that the European Powers, which were interested in the region, discussed the new dynamics of the Aegean Sea. Therefore, not only during the Ambassador's Conferences in London, in which Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary participated between 1912 and 1913, but also at other meetings that took place for the settlement of peace treaties, the Aegean problem with regard to the Dodecanese and the northern Aegean islands were dealt with jointly. But, although both northern and southern Aegean Islands were discussed together during the conferences in London, the actual concern of the Ottomans depended mainly on the former ones. In other words, while the Ottomans stated that since the Aegean Islands were politically

¹⁰³ İdris Bostan, *Midilli'nin İşgal Günlüğü* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2010), pp. 17-18.

¹⁰⁴ Hall, pp.86-87.

and geographically part of the Anatolian mainland, they could not be ceded to any powers;¹⁰⁵ they actually meant the northern Aegean because according to their views the Dodecanese belonged to their sovereignty anyway based on the Ouchy Treaty. Yet, Italians were not as precise as the Ottomans' beliefs. They frequently claimed that since the Ottoman armies had not withdrawn completely from Tripoli and Cyrenaica, they were not required to return the Dodecanese back to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁶

The Italians asserted several times that the Ottomans had not withdrawn their forces from Tripoli out of their fear of the possibility of Greek occupation of the Dodecanese Islands.¹⁰⁷ It was a reality that the Greeks could have occupied the southern islands if they had not been the hostage of a greater power since the Ottoman navy was stuck in the Dardanelles. The preference of the Muslim communities in Rhodes and Kos in terms of the continuation of the Italian occupation until the end of the war,¹⁰⁸ further justifies the Italian assertions. Whether these claims or justifications about the intentions of the Sublime Porte reflected the truth or not, Italy's use of the same non-withdrawal issue as an excuse for not returning the islands back continued for years.

Apart from the withdrawal issue of Italian powers from the Dodecanese, in 1913, to whom they would be ceded was another problem because of the fact that the Ottoman state was not the only claimant. Since the population of the islands was predominantly Greek Orthodox, both the Greek community of the islands and the Dodecanesian diaspora abroad started to campaign for the unification with Greece, beginning from the first days of the Italian occupation. In 1912, all the islands of the Dodecanese held

¹⁰⁵ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p.371.

¹⁰⁶ Childs, p.258.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.259.

¹⁰⁸ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p.295.

plebiscites in favor of uniting with Greece instead of being autonomous, putting the Ottoman suzerainty aside.¹⁰⁹ However, the Italians supported that if Italy left the islands, it would be appropriate to make them autonomous within the structure of the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁰ Obviously, the Italian politicians who desired to be permanent in the region even if they were not explicit on the matter did not welcome the Greek claims on the Dodecanese. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that the Italians evaded discussing the issue directly with Greeks for months.¹¹¹

Apart from the Italians, Ottomans, and Greeks, the other powers discussed their views on the issue during the London Conferences, based on their interests in the Aegean Sea. In this respect, Britain and France generally supported the Greek annexation of the islands, yet the northern Aegean ones,¹¹² due to the fact that the Dodecanese issue was far more complicated diplomatically and legally. Russia's concerns were also concentrated on the northern shores since the Greek sovereignty therein could pose danger to stability in the Straits¹¹³ which had been one of the most crucial matters for Russia throughout its history. But, it also should be stated that the Russian position towards the Greeks changed through the time in a way that they began to support them later on, but with an insistence on a clause of demilitarization.¹¹⁴ Germany and Austria, on the other hand, focused more on the Italian position over the Dodecanese owing to the fact that Italy was a member of Triple Alliance at that time. Although the London Conferences resulted in the London Treaty of 1913, which ended

¹⁰⁹ Zervos, pp.15-27.

¹¹⁰ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.1, p.338.

¹¹¹ Lagoe, p.89.

¹¹² Ibid., pp.79-80.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.52.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.55.

the First Balkan War, did not bring a decisive conclusion on the matter, what those negotiations put forward was just the consensus among these parties which agreed that the Aegean was a problem of the Great Powers.

Italy, throughout the negotiation process during 1913, rejected the Great Power authority in the Aegean, at least in terms of the future of the Dodecanese. According to Rome, since the Italian forces had occupied the Dodecanese Islands before the Balkan Wars, the sole interlocutors on the issue were the Ottomans and Italians.¹¹⁵ Likewise, Istanbul also did not want the intervention of any Great Power into the Dodecanese issue since the Ouchy Treaty had already decided the islands under the sovereignty of the Ottomans.¹¹⁶ But, despite the reluctance of Italy and Turkey, the Great Powers resolved the problem eventually. In this sense, it was settled in terms of the restoration of the Dodecanese Islands to the Ottomans based on the premises of the Ouchy Treaty.¹¹⁷ In other words, these states supported the existing status quo in terms of the Dodecanese, while they resolved to give the remaining Aegean Islands to Greece with few exceptions, which were Bozcaada, Gökçeada, and Kastellorizo.

Until the outbreak of the First World War, the Ottomans dealt with two problems in the Aegean. In terms of the north, Ottoman officials carried out diplomatic meetings, even if they were not successful, with their Greek counterparts since the Sublime Porte did not accept the above-mentioned decision of the Great Powers on that region.¹¹⁸ With regard to the south, they struggled with Italy, which continued to insist on the Ottoman presence in Tripoli and Cyrenaica in order to continue to its occupation in the islands.

¹¹⁵ *La Stampa*, 02 August 1913.

¹¹⁶ Bilal Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu: Belgeler (1913-1914)*, vol.2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), p.xxvi.

¹¹⁷ *La Stampa*, 13 August 1913.

¹¹⁸ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.2, p.xxix.

Italy altered the existing conditions over the Dodecanese later on. That is to say, contrary to the dispositions of Ouchy Treaty, they demanded reparations for their economic losses stemming from the long existence of the Ottoman troops in North Africa, in order not to evacuate the islands. Those demands about the economic losses further transformed into a new desire of economic concessions in the southern Anatolia, especially in the Antalya region.¹¹⁹ The changes in the conditions regarding the Dodecanese were indicators that Rome did not have an intention to abandon this strategically valuable region. When the First World War came, the issues neither on the south nor on the north had been solved. In the existing conditions, the Ottoman Empire was devoid of the strategic superiority that the islands could give to its military, at least in the Aegean Sea at a time that it entered into a “life and death” fight.

Although the situation in the Aegean was vague, it was certain that Europe was progressing towards war. If the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of blocks in Europe generally based on the territorial interests of the parties, the first decade of the twentieth century demonstrated the consolidation of the sides. The so-called temporary occupier of the Dodecanese was on the side of the Triple Alliance through agreements with Austria and Germany until 1915. However, when the war broke out in July 1914, Italy did not declare a war on the side of the Central Powers; instead, it had decided to enter the war “after it was absolutely clear who was winning and then on that winning side.”¹²⁰

During this waiting period, Italy did not just watch the war scene; on the contrary, Italian officials negotiated with both the Alliance and the Entente. Clearly, the

¹¹⁹ Taşkıran, *Oniki Ada'nın Dünü ve Bugünü*, p.77.

¹²⁰ R. J. Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World, 1860-1960* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.31.

most important result these negotiations yielded was the secret Treaty of London of 1915, according to which Italy joined the Triple Entente. One of the most significant promises that the French and the British made to Italy in the Treaty of London was “a clear title to Dodecanese,”¹²¹ the fate of which had been unclear since 1912.

Two facts should be emphasized in this regard. First of all, as can be understood from the abovementioned premise of the London Pact, Italy clearly indicated its intention to obtain the Dodecanese, as opposed to its former behavior that had stressed the temporariness of the occupation from time to time even if it had not been actualized. Indeed, by 1915, Italian officials were stating the fact that Rhodes and the other islands in the region constituted their vital interests, especially with regard to the future undertakings directed at Asia Minor.¹²²

Second, throughout the war years, different parties put forward possible future settlement of the Dodecanese. The Treaty of London was just one example of them. Apart from this treaty and the statements of the Italian officials, the Greeks also kept the issue alive during this four-year period by making declarations that were the mirror of their claims on the region. For example, Venizelos claimed the islands in 1917, although he did not deny the Italian rights especially in terms of bases, particularly on Rhodes and Stampalia,¹²³ which were regarded as important in terms of their strategic geography. It should be stated that by the time of the First World War, the Dodecanese Islands were included in the maps that were designed for future Greece.¹²⁴ In short, both Italy and

¹²¹ Rene Albrecht-Carrie, “Italian Foreign Policy, 1914–1922,” *The Journal of Modern History* 20, no.4 (December 1948), p.332.

¹²² *La Stampa*, 8 March 1915.

¹²³ *La Stampa*, 30 December 1917.

¹²⁴ *La Stampa*, 17 July 1917.

Greece assumed the region under their own sovereignty as the parties of the issue, the former owing to being the occupier while the latter considering itself the motherland.

The other party in the issue, namely the Ottoman Empire, which was the original sovereign of the islands based on the Ouchy Treaty, was in the throes of death during this era. As an empire within a dissolution period, the Ottomans had signed a secret military alliance with the Germans in August 1914. As is well known, when the recently purchased German ships, Goeben and Breslau which were respectively renamed *Yavuz* and *Midilli*, attacked the Russian fleet and ports in the Black Sea; the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War officially in November 1914.¹²⁵ Throughout the war, the Ottomans fought on several fronts in the East and West without much success except the War of Gallipoli. The war in the Dardanelles, however, as the most significant front of the Empire due to its proximity to the capital city, became the sole victory that the Ottomans achieved in the First World War.

The campaign of Gallipoli is also important in terms of the use of the Aegean islands during the operations. It should be underlined that the northern Aegean Islands were used efficiently in the sense that before and during the campaign especially the island of Lemnos became a point of concentration and a military base,¹²⁶ with its suitable ports. The Dodecanese Islands, on the other hand, were not used operatively due to the fact that by the time of the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign, Italy was still conserving its neutral position in the war, on the one hand, and on the other hand even after Rome declared war to the Ottoman Empire in August 1915, it was reluctant to help the Entente with regard to the Dardanelles, as opposed to the pushes of France and

¹²⁵ For more information about the Ottoman entrance into the First World War, see Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, pp.111-113.

¹²⁶ Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu*, vol.2, pp.xxv.

Britain. Therefore, it can be argued that in terms of the Dardanelles, the northern Aegean was active while the Dodecanese remained unproductive for the cause of the Triple Entente.

However, despite the inactivity of these islands in the campaign of the Dardanelles, with the entrance of Italy to the war, military dispatching and concentration began in the area.¹²⁷ This concentration was about the possible landing to the southern Anatolia, specifically around Antalya, based on the promises that the the above-mentioned Treaty of London of 1915 made to Italy.¹²⁸ Therefore, another danger of attack to the core region of the Empire grew out of the Italian existence in the Dodecanese. Actually, this probability of landing on the south and southwestern Anatolia via the islands symbolizes the beginning of a new epoch which would last until the last years of the period that this dissertation examines.

This uncertain situation about a possible Italian movement towards Asia Minor led to concerns among Turkish politicians. In this respect, in response to the intelligence showing the soldier transfers specifically to Rhodes and Stampalia,¹²⁹ the Ottoman government began to take the necessary measures against such an assault, in the relevant regions.¹³⁰ Despite the preparations of the Italians on the islands, the expected assault did not take place during the war. Actually, the only major use of the islands in relation to Turkey in those years was the Italian blockade in the Aegean, which according to the

¹²⁷ Kurtcephe, p.238.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 246.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.241.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.248.

historical documents was not successful due to the presence of the German submarines in the area throughout the war.¹³¹

When the proximity of the islands to Anatolia is kept in mind, it can be argued that Italy could have utilized from these stepping stones in a much more effective way. Several Dodecanesian and Greek groups which sought unification with Greece, like the League of the Dodecanesians as an influential one, also indicated this reality. Just several months before the end of the war, this group, in their letters to Greece, Britain, and France, emphasized the strategic value of these islands that could bring to the Allies not only in terms of chasing the submarines in the Aegean, but also in terms of the possible operations against the Asia Minor in case of the cession of Italian rule in the islands.¹³² But, although Italy did not utilize reasonably from the islands during the war for a landing cause as the Greeks implied, they were not totally irrelevant either owing to the fact the Entente powers were still using them as military bases in the Mediterranean. For instance, the British, after the Italian entrance into the war, utilized Leros as a naval base, which became one of the most important islands of the whole region militarily in subsequent years.¹³³

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Zervos, p.23. "Your Highness, What military value these twelve islands may acquire when liberated from the Italians, they are mobilized by the Dodecanesians themselves, what services these Dodecanesians may render to the great struggle of the Allies by mobilizing all their forces and the dynamiters of the islands for the chasing of the submarines and attacking their bases on the coast of Asia Minor, and finally what other signal services the Dodecanesians may render to the Allies if they ever decide to undertake operations against Smyrna and Asia Minor, all the we shall be able to develop by Word of mouth to Your Highness, as soon as You will be good enough to fix the hour and the day when we may have the privilege to present ourselves to Your Highness and to hand to him the resolution of the Dodecanesians."

¹³³ Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Sistemazione delle Isole Egee*," (Organization of the Aegean Islands), 14 May 1923.

At this point, it is necessary to state that the history of the war was different on Kastellorizo (Meis), compared to the other islands of the Dodecanese, both with regard to the course of events on the island and with regard to the active use of it in the war. The Greeks had occupied Kastellorizo during the Balkan Wars, yet the Great Powers of Europe had decided to hand the island back to the Ottomans. However, this island was still under the control of the Greeks by the time that the First World War broke out. France, then, occupied the island in 1915, making the history of this entity separate from the others until the signing of the peace treaties.¹³⁴

Apart from the difference of its occupiers, its use during the war was much more complicated than that of the Dodecanese group in the sense that in addition to its status as bases for submarines, ships, and airplanes; constant gunfire took place between Kastellorizo and the Anatolian shore across from the island.¹³⁵ This battle situation between Finike, Fethiye, and Kaş region in southern Anatolia and Kastellorizo was so severe that the population of the island, which had been 12,000 before the war, decreased to 3000, when the inhabitants fled to other countries, like Egypt.¹³⁶ Italian archival sources particularly indicate that during the war, the Ottoman and German cannons in the Muğla-Antalya region answered the French fire coming from the island, with the success of blockading the area between Anatolia and this island.¹³⁷ As can be

¹³⁴ For more information about the French rule in Meis, see Nicholas C. Pappas, *Near Eastern Dreams: The French Occupation of Castellorizo 1915-1921* (Rushcutters Bay, New South Wales: Halstead Press, 2002).

¹³⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Nota del Ufficio di Stato Maggiore della Marina*,” (Note from the Office of Navy), 22 March 1923.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*A Il Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri*,” (To the President of the Council of Ministers), 21 March 1923.

seen from the historical data, the region around Kastellorizo experienced a battle situation until the end of the war, which would open a new phase for the island question.

The Return of the Diplomatic Deadlock: The Final Phase of the Dodecanese Question, 1918-1923

The war ended for the Ottoman Empire officially with the Mudros Armistice in 30 October 1918 signed between the Ottoman and the Entente officials on Lemnos Island. The functions of the islands as military bases continued after the ceasefires in the sense that the Dodecanese Islands were used as military stations from which the Italian navy together with the British and French ones conducted maneuvers in the Mediterranean Sea and carried out the postwar occupations.¹³⁸ While the military use of the islands continued, the diplomatic phase also returned with the end of the First World War, because the uncertain fate of the islands with regard to their sovereignty awaited a conclusive settlement.

The Ottoman Empire, on the defeated side, was not a party to the above-mentioned diplomatic processes. The concerns of the Ottomans with regard to the islands were more about their possible use as staging points for an invasion of Anatolia, rather than sovereignty matters. In other words, they were more interested in the military activity on the islands, like the ones in Leros, onto which the transport of soldiers from the Italian mainland continued throughout 1919.¹³⁹

These concerns were legitimate, because the period after the Mudros Armistice saw the partition of the Ottoman mainland to such an extent that only a negligible

¹³⁸ *La Stampa*, 03 December 1918.

¹³⁹ Mevlüt Çelebi, *Milli Mücadele Döneminde Türk-İtalyan İlişkileri* (Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1999), p.86.

amount of Anatolian land was free of the Allied occupation.¹⁴⁰ After this occupation process, history of Turkey entered into a novel phase. In this new stage, the Turkish resistance led by Kemalist movement fought against the occupier powers, especially with the Greeks in western Anatolia, while the European powers tried to find a solution to the Eastern Question either with fighting or through diplomacy.

In this respect, it should be stated that the negotiation process among the powers of Europe was not smooth; on the contrary, it was full of disputes. The Dodecanese also continued to be an issue that was unresolved and complicated especially on the basis of the Italian-Greek relations. The conflict between Italy and Greece stemmed from the fact that the territorial interests of these two countries constantly overlapped, like the one in the Greek occupation of Izmir, which was supposedly an Italian region, thus making the clashes and the negotiations inevitable. Likewise, the Dodecanese issue continued to constitute a conflict between these two parties, into which the other powers intervened.

The bargaining process between the Greek and Italian officials with the assistance of the British and French ones eventually led to an agreement in Paris in which the negotiation of peace treaties was done. Namely, the Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement of 29 July 1919 generally anticipated the cession of the Dodecanese to Greece with the exception of Rhodes, the fate of which was to be based on a plebiscite

¹⁴⁰ After Mudros Armistice, the Entente Powers jointly occupied Istanbul and the Straits. British Powers occupied Mosul in Iraq, as well as Antep, Maraş, Urfa in the Southeastern Anatolia which were taken over by the French later, and Batum and Kars in the Northeastern Anatolia; the French occupied Mersin, Adana in the Southern Anatolia as well as Antep, Maras, Urfa; the Italians landed soldiers in the South and Southwestern Anatolia, namely Antalya, Muğla, Aydın and Konya while the Greeks occupied Izmir region.

that would take place on the day of British withdrawal from Cyprus;¹⁴¹ the acceptance of the Greek seizure of Izmir; the recognition of the Greek authority in Northern Epirus; and in return the Greek recognition of the Italian mandate in central Albania.¹⁴²

However, Italy never ratified this agreement and finally Sforza, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs of the time, renounced the settlement in July 1920, on the grounds that it would do nothing but burden Italy without any compensation in return.¹⁴³ It should be emphasized that between 1923 and 1947, both Greece and the Dodecanesian groups constantly referred to this treaty to legitimize their claims on the area.

Just after the Italian rejection of the agreement, Venizelos declared that he would not sign the Sevres Treaty if Italy did not give the Dodecanese to Greece.¹⁴⁴ After this threat of Greece, the parties signed two treaties in 10 August 1920: The Sevres Treaty and the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement. The Sevres Treaty was never implemented due to the fact that the Kemalist movement which waged war with Greek army in Anatolia and won in 1922, succeeded at settling the territorial issues in the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 that was far more advantageous. But, despite its invalidity, the clauses of the Sevres Treaty regarding the Dodecanese Islands are important to analyze because they did not change in the Lausanne Treaty. In this respect, the 122nd article of the Sevres Treaty states:

Turkey renounces in favour of Italy all rights and title over the following islands of the Aegean Sea: Stampalia (Astropalia), Rhodes

¹⁴¹ Cont Carlo Sforza, *Makers of Modern Europe: Portraits and Personal Impressions and Recollections* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merill Company, 1930), p.171.

¹⁴² Henry James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), p.15.

¹⁴³ Sforza, p.172.

¹⁴⁴ *La Stampa*, 28 July 1920.

(Rhodos), Calki (Kharki), Scarpanto, Casos (Casso) Pscopis (Tilos), Misiros (Nisyros), Calymnos (Kalymnos) Leros, Patmos, Lipsos (Lipso), Sini (Symi), and Cos (Kos), which are now occupied by Italy, and the islets dependent thereon, and also over the island of Castellorizzo.¹⁴⁵

At this point it is necessary to draw attention to two important details. First of all, as can be seen from the article, Kastellorizo was given separate treatment from other islands, probably both due to the fact that during the First World War it had been under the French occupation, and due to the fact that it had been regarded as an island separate from the Dodecanese until the twentieth century. This nature of Kastellorizo in the Sevres, and similarly in the Lausanne Treaty, would lead to a period of conflict between Italy and Turkey in the interwar years, because the clause did not mention the dependent islets and rocks of Kastellorizo, unlike as formulated for the other islands. The problem of the islets dependent upon Kastellorizo will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

The second point, however, was not about the article, but about another document, namely the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement, which was signed after the abovementioned threat of Venizelos and the British pressure that backed the Greek claim in a way that only if Italy accepted to transfer the islands to Greece, Turkey would cede the islands to Italy at Sevres.¹⁴⁶ Thus, with this agreement, Italy had accepted exactly the same clauses of the void Tittoni-Venizelos agreement with regard to the Dodecanese issue. Furthermore, it was absolutely in favor of Greece in terms of its final clause, which stated that the agreement would come into force in the day the Sevres

¹⁴⁵ For the full text of Sevres Treaty see Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Sevres Treaty," <http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1920/TS0011.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2013).

¹⁴⁶ Christopher Seton-Watson, *From Liberalism to Fascism, 1870-1925* (New York: Methuen Ltd., 1967), p.583.

Treaty would be effectuated.¹⁴⁷ Owing to the invalidity of the Sevres Treaty, the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement proved unable to resolve the issue of the Dodecanese Islands officially in 1920. For the final settlement, it would be necessary to wait three years more.

Within these three years, the dynamics of the European politics, especially with regard to the Ottoman territorial settlement, frequently changed based on the course of events. As was stated above, the years between 1920 and 1922 witnessed several wars between the Kemalist nationalist army and the Greek army, which was supported mainly by the British. The Kemalist movement, which established a new parliament in Ankara in 1920, gained strength step by step both through discarding Istanbul, in other words the Ottoman state, and through defeating the Greeks in a series of war the final word of which was said in August 1922 with a decisive Turkish victory. During this two-year war period with the Greeks in the western Anatolia, the Dodecanese Islands under the occupation of Italy, which was technically the ally of Greece, were not used against the Kemalists from a strategic or military point of view.

If the Italian disappointment and anger about the Greek landing in the Izmir region are kept in mind, the relative easiness at least in the southern side of the Aegean vis-à-vis the Asia Minor is not surprising. Actually, leaving the non-use of the Dodecanese militarily against Western Anatolia aside, the clash of interest between Rome and Athens caused the Italians to support the Kemalists diplomatically and militarily, despite their position as occupiers in Anatolia.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, it is seen that the islands were turned into a diplomatic contact point, where sometimes the negotiations of

¹⁴⁷ Fabio L. Grassi, *İtalya ve Türk Sorunu (1919-1923): Kamuoyu ve Dış Politika* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), p.127.

¹⁴⁸ Çelebi, pp.160-162.

arms dealing between the parties occurred in Rhodes.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, some documents designate that the transfer of weapons in terms of Italian aid was carried out from or through the Dodecanese Islands during the National Struggle period.¹⁵⁰

However, the Italian use of the Dodecanese in this period cannot be limited to its position as a place of benign Turkish-Italian contacts. Rome also continued to use these islands, the future of which was unclear at the time, as a mechanism of diplomacy with their European partners. For example, it is seen that when Italy wanted to reconcile with and get closer to its allies with whom it had problems due to the above-mentioned disappointment, it sent the signals of open door for negotiations over the Dodecanese Islands.¹⁵¹ In a concise manner, these islands became a point of diplomacy for the Italians during Turkey's War of Independence, either with the Allies or with Ankara government based on different conditions.

With the victory of the Turks against the Greeks, a new chapter was opened, not only for the future of Turkey but also for the fate of the Dodecanese. After the signing of the Armistice of Mudanya in October 1922, the parties prepared for the negotiations of the peace treaty, which began in Lausanne in 20 November 1922. This period between October and November 1922 became a scene of important discussions among the Allies, reflecting the fractures among them, including the issue of the Dodecanese. For instance, Italy had officially declared the terms and conditions of the Bonin-Venizelos treaty as nonbinding, due to the invalidity of the Sevres Treaty in October 1922.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.285. The historical documents in this study talk about that the parliamentarian of Izmir, Dr. Mustafa Bey, had been sent to Rhodes for arms dealing. He was regarded as the representative of Ankara government in Rhodes.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.161.

¹⁵¹ Grassi, p.150.

With this diplomatic move which was actually the declaration of an obvious fact, Italy claimed its rights over the islands just before the peace negotiations began and during the compensation for the Greek evacuation of Thrace with the Dodecanese was argued.¹⁵² This declaration led to tension between Rome and London. While the Italians underlined the unimportance of this statement because of the already *ipso facto* nullity of the agreement based on the former void peace treaty, the British Foreign Office sent a formal note to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs against this explanation.¹⁵³ On this note, Britain claimed the international character of the issue, which should have been discussed in another platform.¹⁵⁴ Yet, Italy did not accept this offer. During this period, the new Fascist Government and its Prime Minister Benito Mussolini, who held power with the Black Shirt Revolution in October 1920 as one of the major events of the twentieth century European history, had no intention to give up the islands as easily as his former colleagues.

However, despite the determination of Italy at Lausanne in terms of not giving up the region,¹⁵⁵ it was obvious that the ultimate decision for the future proceedings had not been taken at least in the collective meetings. This nature of uncertainty also could be seen in the silence of Mussolini to whom the journalists asked about the future of the Dodecanese during an interview,¹⁵⁶ implying the fragility of the issue among the European powers. But, it also should be emphasized that the open-ended attitude of the parties, especially of the British did not have to do with Lausanne or Turkey. In other

¹⁵² *The Times*, 10 October 1922.

¹⁵³ *La Stampa*, 19 October 1922.

¹⁵⁴ *The Times*, 19 October 1922.

¹⁵⁵ Çelebi, p.345.

¹⁵⁶ *La Stampa*, 20 November 1922.

words, the clashes among the European powers over the Italian or Greek sovereignty on the islands did not mean the negotiability of the issue in terms of Turkish sovereignty. Indeed, as it will be seen below, the negotiations about the islands at Lausanne in terms of Turkey were in general limited to the northern Aegean, with the exception of Kastellorizo Island in the southern group, at least during the formal meetings.

At Lausanne, Turkey presented its position regarding the Aegean based more on the necessity of the Turkish sovereignty on the islands close to the Dardanelles, namely Bozcaada, Gökçeada, and Semadirek (Samothrace), in relation with the security of the region as well as based on the demilitarization of other islands those on the northern part of the Dodecanese with a regime independent from Greece.¹⁵⁷ Since both Greece and Britain refused to accept the Turkish sovereignty on these three islands based on the Wilsonian ethnic majority principle, and Turkey regarded them as the necessary components of its territorial security, the case of the northern Aegean was sent to the sub-commission of the Straits, while the states decided to solve the demilitarization issue of those islands together with Sakız, Midilli, Limni, Sisam, and Nikaria through a commission of experts.¹⁵⁸ As is known, Lausanne Conference is composed of two epochs because of the deadlock in the negotiations among the parties. In this first part of the conference which would last until 4 February 1923, there was no solution to the above-mentioned problems concerning the Aegean Sea. Likewise, no discussion regarding the Dodecanese Islands had taken place in this first phase of the conference.

¹⁵⁷ M. Cemil Bilsel, *Lozan*, vol.2 (İstanbul: Sosyal Yayınlar, 1998), pp.243-245.

¹⁵⁸ For more information about the discussion concerning the sovereignty and demilitarization of the northern Aegean Islands, see Seha L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı: Tutanaklar, Belgeler*, vol.1, pt.1 (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993), pp. 99-116.

In the second half of Lausanne, on the other hand, apart from the above-mentioned clauses on the Aegean, Turkey insisted also on the sovereignty of Kastellorizo from the southern group. Actually, when the first epoch of the Lausanne Conference came to an end, the participants had presented a draft treaty to Turkey. However, Turkey, not accepting this draft treaty, sent a counter-proposal on 8 March 1923, the fifteenth article of which anticipated the inclusion of Kastellorizo within the Turkish territory, which led not only to the various arguments from different parties before and during conference but also to private meetings among the interested sides.

During the formal procedure, Britain stated that the offer of the Turks could be accepted because it had not been an issue in the previous meetings or correspondences, on the one hand, and Kastellorizo was an island that was totally comprised of Greek-Orthodox subjects, on the other hand. In a response to the British delegate Lord Curzon, Turkish representative İsmet Paşa (İnönü) said that Kastellorizo Island, which was within the limits of Turkish territorial waters, was a part of Anatolian lands, thus a small but important component of Anatolian security.¹⁵⁹ According to the Turkish representative, since the island was within the national boundaries, the ethnic composition was not an important dynamic for the solution of the issue.¹⁶⁰ Italy, which took over the island from France in 1921, attributed the invalidity of the Turkish argument both to the absence of this issue in the former propositions that the parties were bounded to keep and to Kastellorizo's geographical position the half of which was outside the Turkish territorial waters.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Bilisel, p.249.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

The discussions about the issue came to a deadlock on the importance of the island for the mutual parties. Although the foreign press designated Kastellorizo as a small and relatively unimportant matter for the future of the meeting,¹⁶² the explanations of the two sides clashed with each other without any positive outcome until the end of the conference. The reasons for Italy to keep the island, or at least not to give it to Turkey, were strategic, psychological, and demographic. First of all, the strategic importance stemmed from three facts: it was close to Asia Minor, which seemed important for Italy in terms of further penetration in the region; it was an important naval base; and it had a key position for the defense of Rhodes in the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶³ All these three facts reflected the major fears of Turkey, which would be uncomfortable with the position of Kastellorizo throughout the period that this dissertation analyzes.

Second, according to the Italian delegate, Kastellorizo was also significant to Rome for psychological reasons. Italy had experienced continuous disappointment since the Great War due to the non-fulfillment of the promised territories and privileges; thus, for the new fascist government, which had thrown out the old administration, the Kastellorizo issue was one of the symbols of fascism's self-respect although it was just a small bit of rock.¹⁶⁴

Third, as was stated in the conference, the island was demographically composed of Orthodox Greeks, who had given a petition with 791 signatures in April specifically asking for Italian sovereignty rather than Turkish.¹⁶⁵ According to the Italian officials,

¹⁶² *The Times*, 1 May 1923.

¹⁶³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*A S.E. l'Alto Commissario ad Interim*," (To His Excellency High Commissioner Ad interim), 4 April 1923.

¹⁶⁴ Ali Naci Karacan, *Lozan* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1971), pp.482-483.

¹⁶⁵ ASMAE, Pacco, Dodecanneso 986, "*Castelrosso*," (Kastellorizo), 7 April 1923.

the number of signatures was enough to regard the petition as virtually plebiscite,¹⁶⁶ thus increasing the significance of the Italian sovereignty on the island. However, the Turkish officials were constantly repeating the fact that ethnicity could not be decisive in a case concerning the territorial integrity of a country.

For Turkey, Kastellorizo was crucial because it was within its territorial waters, and could be dangerous for Turkish mainland if it were under the sovereignty of a foreign power, especially in the case of aggression. Yet, the Italian officials regarded this fear of Turkey as groundless by reminding the First World War in which Turkey damaged the island with few cannons.¹⁶⁷ In addition to the strategic importance of the islands, the documents indicate that Turkey also implied the contraband between Kastellorizo and Anatolian shores, specifically Kaş (Antifilio), as one of the reasons for the necessity of Turkish sovereignty in order to avoid future complications. According to the Italians, on the other hand, a separate agreement about the economic relations between two entities could actually solve this problem.¹⁶⁸

Due to these reasons, both Turkey and Italy did not give up on Kastellorizo until the end of the conference. But on 4 June 1923, the Turkish delegate read a memorandum through which it was stated that although Kastellorizo was clearly a part of Anatolia, the Turkish Committee was making a grand sacrifice for the sake of peace.¹⁶⁹ In other words, Turkey had accepted to cede Kastellorizo to Italy in order to reach a peace settlement, which was an important and multidimensional issue for the country beyond

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “A Il Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri,” (To the President of the Council of Ministers), 21 March 1923.

¹⁶⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Trattative del R. Console a Smirne con İsmet Pascia*,” (Negotiations of the Royal Consul of İzmir with İsmet Paşa), 16 April 1923; “*Castelrosso*” (Kastellorizo), 1 May 1923.

¹⁶⁹ Bilsel, p.250.

the mere problems of islands. It was stated that in exchange for Kastellorizo, Turkey gained the sovereignty of the Tavşan (Merkep) Islands, which were situated in the northern Aegean, close to the Dardanelles.¹⁷⁰

Articles twelve to sixteen in the Lausanne Treaty which was finally signed on 24 July 1923, arranged the island issues. Concerning the northern Aegean, the 12th article recognize Turkish sovereignty on Bozcaada, Gökçeada, and Tavşan Adaları while foresees the cession of Lemnos, Samothrace, Mytilene, Chios, Samos and Nikaria to Greece.¹⁷¹ As a result of Turkish insistence during the conference, the treaty provided a demilitarization clause for these islands, though not under a special autonomous regime but ceded directly to Greece.¹⁷² The 15th article of the Lausanne Treaty organizes the fate of the Dodecanese Islands:

Turkey renounces in favour of Italy all rights and title over the following islands: Stampalia (Astrapalia), Rhodes (Rhodos) Calki (Kharki), Scarpanto, Casos (Casso), Piscopis (Tilos), Misiros (Nisyros), Calimnos (Kalymnos), Leros, Patmos, Lipsos (Lipso), Simi (Symi), and Cos (Kos), which are now occupied by Italy, and the islets dependent thereon, and also over the island of Castellorizzo.¹⁷³

With this statement, the legal problem of the Dodecanese regarding the Ouchy Treaty of 1912 had been solved, at least for Turkey.¹⁷⁴ On the same day as the Lausanne Treaty was signed, the Italian and Turkish delegations exchanged letters for the demilitarization

¹⁷⁰ *The Times*, 1 June 1923.

¹⁷¹ Lausanne Treaty, Article 12. For the treaty, see Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Lausanne Peace Treaty," http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹⁷² Article 13, *Ibid*.

¹⁷³ Article 15, *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ Despite the Lausanne Treaty, the issue would continue to be discussed especially among Britain, Italy, and Greece until 1925. This issue will be handled in Chapter 3.

of Kastellorizo. In a letter to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mussolini explained this exchange of letters as an obligation to destroy the French military bases on the island, not to fortify the region with armaments, and not to keep more soldiers than the local security necessitated, in return for a Turkish promise of not strengthening the coastal defense in front of the island.¹⁷⁵

With the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, a novel and important epoch was opened for the relationship between the islands and the mainland, which will be explained in the following chapters. While the new Turkey signed the document of its international recognition, which can be unquestionably regarded as a success, the cession of the islands close to Asia Minor to other nations started a period throughout which the tension, aggression, and fear would be the most important dynamics of the bilateral relations. The problematic relations with the islands would become the norm, rather than an exceptional situation for Republican Turkey. This study analyzes the period until 1947; however, it is necessary to remember that the same dynamics continued until the present day. Therefore, Lausanne while being a success for the new Turkey in general, would lead to problems in the Aegean in specific.

Turkey ratified the Lausanne Treaty on 23 August 1923, after a two-day deliberation process in the parliament. One of the opponents of the treaty, Şükrü Bey (Kaya), who was born in Kos (İstanköy) and became Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs later on in different cabinets, challenged the treaty on the basis of the articles about the islands, stating that:

¹⁷⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 896, “*Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo), 28 May 1923.

...After the Straits, there are the islands of Midilli, Sakız, and Sisam. Please, imagine the map with me. These islands are beautiful parts of Anatolia... Is there a possibility to survive for us when these islands are in the hands of foreigners? It will be more difficult to make sacrifices to sustain the safety of our coasts than to hold the islands themselves... These islands were created for the defense of Anatolia... Gentlemen! When we progress southward from Sisam Island which has been given to Greece, we encounter the other islands... There are precious islands within these groups inhabited by Turks, like Rhodes, Kos, and Meis, which are adjacent to Anatolia... In my opinion, these islands are the beginning of a politics of abuse towards Anatolia in the hands of the Italians.¹⁷⁶

The statement of Şükrü Kaya has not been quoted here in order to show the treaty as a historical failure or to designate the inability of the Turkish politicians to impose their will about the islands during the conference. Rather, it is used to show the deputy's success in his prediction in the sense that in the subsequent period Italy intimidated Turkey with its expansionist strategy and with the unending militarization of the islands while designating how Turkey made effort to protect its coastal areas. In conclusion, similar to the idea of Şükrü Kaya, this study is mainly the narrative of the disturbance that these foreign islands caused to Turkey with regard to diplomacy, military, economy, and social relations, thus opening a new epoch for Anatolia beginning from 1923 based on the problematic contacts between the islands and the mainland.

¹⁷⁶ Speech of the parliamentarian of Menteşe, Şükrü Kaya, *TBMM Zabıt Cerideleri*, İctima: 7, Cilt: 3, 21.8.1339, p.238. “Boğazlardan sonra Midilli, Sakız ve Sisam adaları vardır. Rica ederim benimle beraber tekrar haritayı göz önüne getiriniz. Bu adalar Anadolu’dan kopmuş güzel birer parçadır... Bu adalar yabancı ellerde bulunduğça bize sahillerde yaşamak imkanı var mıdır? Sahillerimizin temini asayışı için edeceğiniz mütevali fedakarlıklar bu adaların zabıt ve raptından daha ziyade güç olacaktır... Bu adalar sırf Anadolu’nun müdafaası için yaratılmıştır... Efendiler! Yunanistan’a bahşedilen Sisam adasından aşağıya doğru gidecek olursak daha birtakım adalara tesadüf ederiz... Bunlar içerisinde Rodos gibi İstanköy, Meis gibi Anadolu’ya bitişik ve Türklerle meskun kıymetli adalar vardır... Bu adalar bence İtalyanların elinde Anadolu’ya doğru uyanacak bir isti’mar ve istismar siyasetinin bir mukaddimesidir...”

This chapter displayed the historical paths on the way of the separation of the Dodecanese from the sovereignty of the nearby coast. The occupation of the Dodecanese during the War of Tripoli went along with the Greek takeover of the northern Aegean islands close to the Dardanelles during the Balkan Wars. That is to say, the years 1912 and 1913 put the whole Aegean in the middle of a diplomatic process. Two features of this procedure seem important. First, the islands became a European problem rather than a bilateral one, owing to the fact that the region was on the way to Anatolia and the Middle East. Second, in terms of the Dodecanese, the Italians transformed their stance through time from the temporariness of the occupation to the desire of keeping them as the bases for future ventures.

From a strategic point of view, in 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War without its islands in the Aegean Sea. The existence of counterparties on the islands constituted an important strategic deficit due to their proximity to Asia Minor as well as the Straits. During the war, it is seen that the Dodecanese was not used much compared to the islands situated in the north, closer to the Dardanelles. In the post war period, on the other hand, they both became stepping stones for the occupation of Anatolia.

This chapter also showed that since the Italian relationship with the Entente powers was injured with the Greek occupation of Izmir, the role of the Dodecanese evolved into a point for aid and diplomacy in favor of Turks. That is to say, despite the differences in the attitudes through the time, the geography of the region mattered all the way.

This chapter also showed that the strategic considerations of the islands constitute only one part of the story during and after the Great War. The islands were uninterruptedly under discussion in the diplomatic meetings during the war. What stands out in this process is the fact that the issue, which had gone out of the hands of the Ottoman Empire beginning with 1913, further broke off Turkey with the Great War. The wartime and post war negotiations showed that Greece emerged as the leading claimant of the islands in front of Italy.

This epoch came to an end with Lausanne, through which Turkey renounced its rights over the islands to Italy, turning the de facto sovereignty of Italians in the region into a de jure one. In this way, the newborn Turkey began its life with the islands in the hands of Greece and Italy. Turkey would feel the impacts of this situation as soon as the parties ratified the treaty, signifying the beginning of an era full of problems that constitute the subject of below pages.

CHAPTER 3

ON THE VERGE OF WAR: THE SETTLEMENT ON THE DODECANESE ISLANDS AND TURKISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY IN RESPONSE, 1923-1927

With the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, Turkey transferred its *de jure* sovereignty over the Dodecanese to Italy, which had already had *de facto* control of the region since 1912, which had been one of the diplomatic problems of European politics. However, despite this settlement, the Dodecanese Islands continued to be a source of bilateral and multilateral deliberations, and of military tension, specifically with Turkey, beginning with the days following the signing of the treaty. Three different but interrelated aspects of the Dodecanese Islands during the first years of the Turkish Republic were important for Turkish foreign and security policy.

First of all, Greece constantly challenged the legal status of the islands throughout the period of this study, despite a conclusion at Lausanne. Britain played a role in this process, especially during 1923 and 1924. Turkey followed this situation with attention even if Ankara was no longer a party of the deal. The only confrontation about the status of the region was not just related to the major islands as Italy, Greece, and Britain discussed. Just after Turkey ratified the treaty, the clashes about the islets and the rocks around Kastellorizo began, based on the Turkish actions in the area. In other words, in spite of the Lausanne, the parties kept on discussing and claiming the islands and the islets in this period, leading to problems between the states.

Another aspect of this chapter is the problems, mostly the economic and the legal ones, stemming from the fact that the islands and the mainland were no longer under the same sovereignty at a time when nationalism was a key ideology and the boundaries were sacred. The separation of the islands from the mainland created problems both in terms of the lives of the people, specifically the ones from the islands practicing economic activities in both places, as a result of the closure of the borders to foreigners for instance regarding fishing; and in terms of Turkey's relations with the opposite shore. This section, about the changing economic and social relations, designates well that how these were tied to the foreign and security policy of Turkey at that time.

Although these two problematic aspects of the islands were effective in Turkish foreign policy, the determining factor on the relations in this sub-period became the military and political situation in the islands to a great extent. The existence of an aggressive state, namely Italy, and its activities on those islands, which were regarded as the stepping stones to expand in the east by Rome, rendered the Dodecanese one of the most influential parameters of Turkish foreign and security policy in this period. This commenced a new era in which Turkey formulated the islands as a threat to its national security.

Keeping this special status of the Dodecanese for Turkey in mind, the main aim of this chapter is to show how the islands influenced Turkish Republic in the first years after its foundation. Actually, that is a story full of tension which is described as “on the verge of war,” as the title suggests, due to the territorial ambitions of Rome on Asia Minor. The fear of Turkey to be attacked via the Dodecanese oriented the Turkish diplomatic and military understanding parallel to the core principle of the realist

perspective in international relations, which suggests that when a security issue arises for a state, it increases its military power and/or diplomatic alliances.¹⁷⁷

Turkey's position in relation to the Dodecanese reflects this assumption in a way that this period witnessed the military build-up in the western and south-western Anatolia as a reaction to the Italian military settlement on the islands. It can be argued that since Turkey could not increase its diplomatic alliances in this period owing to its relative international isolation, it focused more attention on solving the existing problems that would break this isolation and took diplomatic measures accordingly. Therefore, this chapter examines how the Italian policies in the Dodecanese directed Turkish foreign and security policy, suggesting that the islands were one of the most important determinants on those areas. In order to designate this influential position of the Dodecanese in Turkish security and foreign policy, it is necessary to understand the political status of Turkey, both on the domestic scene and in the international arena during these years.

The Creation of Modern Turkey: Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy in the 1920s

After the signing of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, Turkish politics entered into a novel phase during which all the structures of the Turkish state were transformed into a national state as opposed to the previous framework of a multi-ethnic empire. The new state experienced a rapid modernization process which was much more radical than the ones undertaken in the precedent periods.

¹⁷⁷ Paul D. Senese and John A Vasquez, "Assessing the Steps to War," *British Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (October 2005), p.608.

As is known, the parliament in Ankara abolished the Ottoman Sultanate just after the victory in the war with the Greeks in 1922. Likewise, the second move of the Ankara government came after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty in July 1923 with the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) became the first president and İsmet Paşa (İnönü) the first prime minister of the new Republic. The years followed the foundation of the Republic saw a radical modernization project which anticipated the transformation of both politics and society. One of the most important components of this transformation was secularization, in the sense that almost all of the reforms were related to it in one way or another.

Ahmad writes that “the slogan of radical Kemalists during these years was ‘Let’s smash the Idols.’”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the reform project after the foundation of the Republic demolished the symbols of old regime one by one. The abolition of Caliphate in 1924 was one of the essential breaks with the old system because the duality in the political organization after the abolition of the Sultanate had completely come to an end. This move erased the most important political-religious authority of the old regime. Similarly, the closure of the religious orders (*tekke ve zaviyeler*), the adoption of the European hat rather than the Ottoman fez, and the change of the calendar and time system in 1925 constituted the continuation of the reforms of secularization and Westernization in social and political life. The change of the Civil Code in terms of the complete secularization with the adoption of Swiss law in 1926 was another says, as Ahmad calls, on the old regime.¹⁷⁹ In addition, the alteration of the alphabet in 1928, in other words, the transition from Arabic script to Latin one, further broke the ties off with the past.

¹⁷⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), p.79.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.80.

The reforms continued into the 1930s, as well. When the interwar period came to an end, Turkish legal and political system had been changed altogether. However, the political environment of the 1930s was different than the one of the 1920s. The Kemalist regime had been settled in the 1930s as opposed to the complicated and fragile position of the system, in other words “the troubled post-war period”¹⁸⁰ as Zürcher calls, in this decade. This troubled post-war period of the 1920s was all related to domestic politics, economic issues, and foreign policy.

In terms of domestic politics, the radical reform process, from the proclamation of the Republic to the whole secularization movement, the authoritarian tendency within the Republican People’s Party’s (RPP) leadership, together with the nationalistic and radical secularist stance of the new state created opposition in the country. That is to say, while some sort of discomfort about the jakobin secularization movement of the Kemalists developed within a certain part of society with religious tendencies, anxiety aroused also within the particular divisions of the RPP’s cadres which regarded this experience as too rapid to handle and became concerned with the rising power of Mustafa Kemal. The discomfort within the RPP reached to an extent in 1924 that the opponents, who were mostly the former unionists, established another party called the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*).¹⁸¹

The emergence of an opposition was not the only source of concern for the RPP. Instead, other developments occurred within the first years of the Republic that can be considered as part of the post-war troubles of Turkey. For example, one of the most serious of such events was the Sheik Sait Rebellion, based on the combined dynamics of

¹⁸⁰ Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, p.174.

¹⁸¹ For more information about the opposition movement in the first years of the Republic, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1992).

Kurdish nationalism and Islamic religion.¹⁸² Although the state suppressed the rebellion with militaristic measures in addition to the legal ones,¹⁸³ Sheik Sait and other uprisings in the eastern part of Turkey challenged the new Republic.

In addition to this politically complex situation, which could be regarded as a process of consolidation of the new system, the economy was also under transition in the 1920s. Turkish territory had experienced a ten-year war period by 1923. The richest regions had been occupied, the economic infrastructure of the country had been devastated, the boundaries had been narrowed compared to the Ottoman Empire, the population had decreased,¹⁸⁴ and sharp fall of the agricultural production had taken place.¹⁸⁵ After 1923, however, the Turkish economy entered into a reconstruction and recovery process through which economic growth occurred mainly due to the increase in the agricultural production on, and through which a new economic settlement took place based on legal measures like the abolition of the tithe (*âşar*) and foundation of some institutions.¹⁸⁶

The 1920s saw consolidation of the new regime in terms of politics and a recovery period in terms of economics. Neither area was without problems. Apart from these, another field which both influenced the above-mentioned processes and was

¹⁸² Since the Sheik Sait Rebellion took place during the Mosul crisis, the British involvement in the issue is also a question mark. The Sheik Sait Rebellion will be discussed again in this chapter, based on Mosul question.

¹⁸³ One of the most important of these measures was the Law on Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu) which included militaristic measures. For the impacts of these laws in Turkish politics, see Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, pp.171-172.

¹⁸⁴ According to the population census of 1927, 13.5 million people were living in the boundaries of the modern Turkey as opposed to the prewar number of 17 million.

¹⁸⁵ Çağlar Keyder, *The Definition of a Peripheral Economy: Turkey, 1923-1929* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press & Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981), p.129.

¹⁸⁶ For more information about the economic policies of 1920s in Turkey, see Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi, 1908-2002* (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 2011), pp. 39-57.

influenced by them at the same time was foreign policy. This field had features that were both similar to and different from the previous epochs. Some of the dynamics are necessary to discuss in order to be able to interpret the reactions of Turkey in certain foreign and security policy cases, including its attitude towards the Dodecanese.

The new Republic can be regarded as having been a middle power in the international system, similar to the late Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁷ This position influenced the behavior of Ankara towards its neighbors, including Italy in the Dodecanese Islands. The fear of Turkey about the islands, which may seem contradictory especially when their sizes are compared to the mainland, reflect this situation, because Turkey had become a neighbor with a greater power with revisionist aims via these islands. This situation did not change throughout the epoch of this dissertation. What makes the 1920s were special for Turkey in this sense was that it had tense relations with the islands belonging to a more powerful state, during a period when it had diplomatic problems without much international support.

Another characteristic of Turkish foreign policy in the 1920s, and in general throughout the interwar years, was its independence,¹⁸⁸ as opposed to the foreign policy of the previous empire. That is to say, Turkey did not join any camps in the interwar years, even if Ankara was trying to come closer especially to Britain in the second half of the 1930s, as a result of the developments in the European scene on the one hand, and

¹⁸⁷ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*. Hale describes a middle power as being between the two extremes of the scale, namely between small power and great power and as having the ability to resist pressure from more powerful states, and to influence the weaker ones, especially if they are neighbors. Ibid., pp.1-2.

¹⁸⁸ Baskın Oran, "Görelî Özerklik-I, Genel Değerlendirmeler," in *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I:1919-1980*, (ed.)Baskın Oran, 6 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), s.256-257.

in the Mediterranean region, on the other hand.¹⁸⁹ Especially in terms of the 1920s, the independent behavior of Turkish foreign policy can be analyzed within three respects. First of all, although Turkey's foremost aim in international politics was to become a respected European power as a civilized and westernized nation,¹⁹⁰ memories of war and occupation together with the recently abolished system of capitulations in the Ottoman Empire were still alive in minds of the Turkish decision-makers. The Turkish politicians, while trying to Europeanize the country thoroughly as was stated above, regarded independence as an essential condition to be able to exist.

Second, until the end of the 1930s, the conjunction of world politics was suitable for independent policies. The international system had supported the Turkish stance. However, although the period between 1918 and 1939 is analyzed as in a single category, "interwar period," the 1920s was different from the latter part of the era also in this sense. The great powers, together with the new national-states after the fall of the empires, entered into a reconstruction period in a new international system after an all-consuming war.

In this new system, the 1920s reflects an environment in which the realist attitudes of the winners and the losers of the Great War clashed with the idealists, who tried to constitute a collective peace mechanism, namely the League of Nations.¹⁹¹ Although the League of Nations disappointed both the realists and the idealists in the end, with the marginalization of the institution in the European politics,¹⁹² the loss of

¹⁸⁹ These contacts had led to the Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty in 1939 which will be dealt with in the next chapters.

¹⁹⁰ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p.57.

¹⁹¹ Mark Mazower, *Karanlık Kıta: Avrupa'nın 20. Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), pp.72-77.

¹⁹² Ibid., p.73.

hopes for international peace in terms of territorial conflicts based on the formation of opposite and clearly distinct two blocks, namely the revisionists and anti-revisionists, corresponds much more to the 1930s, with the steady rise of the right in Europe. Therefore, if the argument of Eric Hobsbawm about the undeniable reason for the Second World War that the “aggression by three malcontent powers bound together by various treaties from the middle 1930s”¹⁹³ is kept in mind, it is not surprising to see that a more free space existed for countries like Turkey regarding being able to act independently in the international arena without conclusive blocks in the 1920s.

This independency, especially in terms of the 1920s, also could be interpreted from a third angle, associated with the abovementioned troubled post-war theme of Turkey. Apart from these two reasons, the foreign policy of the Republic outside the blocks also was tied to its relative isolation in the international arena especially until the end of the 1920s, yet officially until 1932, when Turkey became a member of the League of Nations, which was important for Ankara’s international status despite its ineffectiveness as a peace institution.¹⁹⁴

Turkey was a relatively isolated country during the 1920s regardless of the League membership. Ankara did not have many alliances apart from Soviet Russia. As could be expected, this solitariness was reflected in Turkey’s stance in certain security issues in the 1920s. For example, in terms of the Dodecanese, the loneliness had led

¹⁹³ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes, The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994), p.37

¹⁹⁴ It is not a coincidence that some of the books about Turkish foreign policy makes periodization in terms of interwar years as 1923-1932 and 1932-1939, dividing the period into two, because despite the decay of international cooperation in the 1930s, being a part of an international organization as an equal partner was important for Turkey and was regarded as a turning point for diplomatic historians. For one of the most valuable examples of this tradition, see Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası (1919-1965)*.

Turkey to lean over the military force option rather than diplomatic contacts in this sub-period, as was suggested above.

The dominance of military thinking in reaction to foreign policy problems especially in the first years of the Republic should not be confused with an offensive strategy either. The famous statement of Atatürk, “peace at home, peace in the world,” reflects the orientation of the country’s foreign policy. However, since Turkey had become neighbor with the powerful states of Europe, the majority of which had fought with the Ottoman Empire, there was need for a realist policy,¹⁹⁵ which was formulated on protecting the borders, rather than being offensive. Therefore, beginning with the 1920s, Turkey began to follow an anti-revisionist strategy which refused to change the borders, but was always prepared to defend its borders, as will be seen below.

Apart from the stance of Ankara, Turkish foreign policy was experiencing concrete problems in the 1920s with particular countries based on the issues that the Lausanne Treaty had not resolved. One of the most important problems that Turkey faced was the sovereignty of Mosul. The question of Mosul influenced Turkey’s relationship not only with Britain, but also with the other European powers,¹⁹⁶ in terms of Turkey’s attitude towards the Aegean, specifically the Dodecanese Islands, because as much as Turkey was close to a military clash with the British in the east, it was on the verge of war with the Italians through the Dodecanese, not being independent subjects from each other as will be analyzed below. That means, Turkey had coped with a multi-faceted problem in its foreign and security policy until 1926, in which the Mosul question was resolved in favor of Britain. When the above-mentioned domestic and

¹⁹⁵ Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası (1919-1965)*, p.63.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.75.

foreign statuses of the republic are considered, the importance of the Mosul question is comprehended better.

In addition to Mosul, Ankara dealt with other diplomatic problems even if they were much less vital to its existence. The problems with Greece during the 1920s largely stemmed from the population exchange of 1923, based on different interpretations of its scope and on the reciprocal controversy about the properties of the parties involved.¹⁹⁷ The problems about the population exchange between Ankara and Athens came to an end specifically in 1930, after which the two countries took steps toward a sincere friendship. But, the issues occupied a place in the minds of the two nations throughout the 1920s, sometimes causing hostilities between them. The period of General Pangalos in Greece in this regard, will be further emphasized below, because it links the Dodecanese to the northern Aegean Islands during 1925, even if for a short span of time.

Similarly, Turkey had problematic relations with France during the 1920s owing to the unresolved question of the Syrian border, and the Ottoman debts which were mostly owed to France.¹⁹⁸ It will be waited for the 1930s for the solution of these questions once again.

One of the most problematic relationships of Ankara in the 1920s, as was the case in the 1930s, was with Fascist Italy, stemming from the combination of the

¹⁹⁷ For more information about the population exchange and the problems of this exchange on Greek and Turkish relations, see M. Murat Hatipoğlu, *Yakın Tarihte Türkiye ve Yunanistan, 1923-1954* (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 1997); and Onur Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of the Populations, 1922-1934* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁹⁸ For more information about the relations with France of the time, see İsmail Soysal, *Les relations politiques Turco-Françaises (1921-1985): Extrait de l'Empire Ottoman, la République de Turquie et la France* (Paris: Editions ISIS, 1980); and Serhan Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu, 1918-1939* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2005).

aggressive foreign and military policies of Rome and the reflection of these policies through the Dodecanese Islands from which Turkey always felt vulnerable to an attack.¹⁹⁹ Since the impacts of these islands are the core subject of this study, the nature of this relationship in terms of the islands will be analyzed below in a detailed way.

As discussed, in the 1920s, Turkey experienced a rapid modernization process while dealing with particular sources of opposition or discontent. In this respect, the “troubled post-war” definition for the period seems viable, both for domestic and international politics. It should be noted that even if Turkey had paid more attention to the modernization project with its all dynamics, the viewpoint suggesting that “foreign relations took a backseat, as internal reconstruction and reform became the Turkish government’s main priority and the international situation did not seem threatening,”²⁰⁰ does not explain the whole truth.

Between 1924 and 1926 when Turkey dealt actively with internal modernization and its recovery process, Ankara also struggled with serious diplomatic and security problems, living with a constant possibility of war. In addition to foreign policy problems with the neighboring states, except for the Soviet Union, which had become an ally for Turkey at the end of the previous decade,²⁰¹ Turkey had prioritized some issues of foreign policy concerning its security at this period, as the issues below will become an important example of it.

¹⁹⁹ For an analysis of the Turkish-Italian relations in the interwar years, see Dilek Barlas, “Friend or Foes,” pp. 231-252.

²⁰⁰ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p.71.

²⁰¹ Oran, “Görelî Özerklik-I, Dönemin Bilançosu,” in *Türk Dış Politikası*, p.242. For a detailed story of Turkish-Soviet relations of the time, see Kamuran Gürün, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri, 1920-1953*(Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991).

What Belongs to Whom? The Legal Status of the Dodecanese

The previous chapter analyzed the process during which the sovereignty of the Dodecanese was determined. The fifteenth article of the Lausanne Treaty had concluded the sovereignty of the Dodecanese, which had been under negotiation based on bilateral conversations, the secret agreements, and the international conferences, in favor of Italy:

Turkey renounces in favour of Italy all rights and title over the following islands: Stampalia (Astrapalia), Rhodes (Rhodos) Calki (Kharki), Scarpanto, Casos (Casso), Piscopis (Tilos), Misiros (Nisyros), Calimnos (Kalymnos), Leros, Patmos, Lipsos (Lipso), Simi (Symi), and Cos (Kos), which are now occupied by Italy, and the islets dependent thereon, and also over the island of Castellorizzo.²⁰²

However, the second half of 1923 and 1924 showed that this clause did not bring an end to the discussions and disputes about the islands in two respects. The first dispute was about the difference between Turkish and Italian interpretations of the clause. Nearly a month after the Turkish ratification of the treaty, the officials in Ankara started to claim that the islets dependent on Kastellorizo belonged to Turkish sovereignty based on Lausanne.²⁰³ This view of Turkey stemmed from the fact that fifteenth article of the treaty, while referring to the islets dependent on the other islands of the Dodecanese group, made no mention of the islets contingent upon Kastellorizo.²⁰⁴ According to the

²⁰² Article 15, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Lausanne Treaty," http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (accessed May 24, 2013).

²⁰³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Al Signor Giovanni Lakerdis, Sindaco di Castelrosso a Rodi*," (To Mr. Giovanni Lakerdis, the Mayor of Kastellorizo in Rhodes), 25 October 1923.

²⁰⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Questione Confini Italo-Turchi*," (The Boundary Question between Turkey and Italy), 13 November 1927.

Turkish officials, since a separate condition existed for Kastellorizo in the clause without any open reference to the islets, Turkey had not transferred its rights on these islets to any country.

Italy was aware of the vacuum in the clause. As a result, the first action of Turkish officials that went from Antalya to Karavola (Kekova), one of the dependent islets of Kastellorizo, for the first time after many decades, had led to frustration in Italian official circles.²⁰⁵ This frustration manifested itself in the correspondence of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through which the officials tried to produce counterarguments.

They highlighted the Kastellorizo population's ties with the islets, used as sources of timber, lime, and pastures,²⁰⁶ making the economic integrity of the islets with Kastellorizo as the basis of the main Italian stance, but they also acknowledged the strength of Turkish position.²⁰⁷ According to these official papers, during the conference, Italy had demanded an additional statement, "the islets dependent on Kastellorizo," for the fifteenth article; however, Britain had refused this based on the probability of a Turkish rejection.²⁰⁸ Thus, the ambiguity in the treaty was the result of a conscious act.

Whatever the reason for this confusion, the official visit of the Turks, parallel to the concerns of the population, was repeated in October 1923, this time with more of

²⁰⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Isolotti Dipendenti da Catelrosso*," (Islets dependent on Kastellorizo), 18 September 1923.

²⁰⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Isolotti Dipendenti da Catelrosso*," (Islets dependent on Kastellorizo), 12 September 1923.

²⁰⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Isolotti Dipendenti da Catelrosso*," (Islets dependent on Kastellorizo), 18 September 1923.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

military presence.²⁰⁹ Turkish military officials and the Mayor of Kaş (Antifilio) visited Karavola, declaring that since they would occupy the islands, the inhabitants should have abandoned the area.²¹⁰ Although people on the islet protested the Turks as they were unable to leave the area immediately because of the existence of their livestock, the Turkish officials hoisted a Turkish flag on the islet and gave the people fifteen days notice.²¹¹ Parallel to the warnings of the officials in Karavola about the further occupations of the other islets around Kastellorizo like Ipsili, Volo, and Ascendra,²¹² the Turkish flag was hoisted on many islets before December 1923.²¹³ This was the starting point of the struggle around Kastellorizo that would last until 1932.

The Turkish occupation of the majority of the islets dependent on Kastellorizo alarmed both the Italian government and the population of the island.²¹⁴ While the concerns of the population centered on the economic integrity of the islets on Kastellorizo,²¹⁵ as stated above, Rome protested Turkey on the grounds that these actions were unjust and unilateral.²¹⁶ The reactions were not just discursive. Italy, in reply to the Turkish actions, occupied San Giorgio (*Rho*), one of the largest islets near

²⁰⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Al Signor Giovanni Lakerdis, Sindaco di Castelrosso a Rodi*,” (To Mr. Giovanni Lakerdis, the Mayor of Kastellorizo in Rhodes), 25 October 1923.

²¹⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Occupazione Turca Isola Caravola*,” (Turkish Occupation of Karavola), 29 October 1923.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Occupazione Turca Isolotti*,” (Turkish Occupation of Islets), 1 December 1923.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ The most important problem seems the one about animal husbandry. When Turkey occupied the islands, transportation of the animals were discussed and highlighted. ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Occupazione Turca Isolotti*,” (Turkish Occupation of Islets), 2 December 1923.

²¹⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Occupazione Turca Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (Turkish Occupation in Kastellorizo Islets), 30 November 1923.

Kastellorizo. Turkey, in return, protested the Italian action, citing a breach of the clause of the Lausanne Treaty.²¹⁷

Although the chain of occupations created tension in the region, it neither turned into an open military conflict nor resulted in a solution, despite the existence of several meetings on the issue. In the meetings that took place in April 1924 between the Turkish Prime Minister and the Undersecretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs,²¹⁸ the Italian delegate reported that this issue could not be discussed at that time,²¹⁹ probably due to the warlike situation between Turkey and Italy, based on the military proceedings in the Dodecanese. Indeed, the above-mentioned warlike situation resulted in the fact that the problematic issue about Kastellorizo was frozen in 1924, because no important initiative took place between the parties until 1927. As could be seen from these historical events, the contestation of the sovereignty of some islets and of small rocks in the area dates back to 1923, when the future of the Aegean Sea was determined.

Nearly at the same time that the status around Kastellorizo was contested, Greece, Italy and Britain were discussing the future of the bigger area, namely the Dodecanese. Although the issue of the sovereignty of the Dodecanese Islands was supposed to have been closed with the Lausanne Treaty, the parties were still negotiating the previously failed attempts of Tittoni-Venizelos and Bonin-Venizelos agreements.²²⁰ Greece claimed sovereignty of the Dodecanese based on former treaties and demographically Greek character of the islands. Italy counter-argued that all

²¹⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Occupazione Isola San Giorgio*,” (Occupation of San Giorgio), 14 December 1923.

²¹⁸ In this period, the Undersecretary of the Turkish Foreign Ministry was Tevfik Kamil (Bey).

²¹⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Isolotti Dipendenti da Castelrosso*,” (The Islets Dependent on Kastellorizo), 9 May 1924.

²²⁰ For more information about these agreements and the negotiations for the future of the Dodecanese before 1923, see Chapter 2.

previous accords, specifically the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement signed with the Sevres Treaty, had become void due to abrogation of the latter with the consent of the allies.²²¹

The end of 1923 and the first half of 1924 saw negotiations specifically between Britain and Italy, despite the previous statements of Mussolini, who had assured the Italian press that no Dodecanese question existed.²²² However, with the British pressure for a new settlement parallel to the Greek quest for help on the matter, a series of colloquia took place between Mussolini and Lord Curzon.²²³ Britain's activity in this matter stemmed not only from the traditional direction of the British foreign policy, but also from the concerns about the Mediterranean naval balance of power if Italian sovereignty over the islands continued.²²⁴

In those meetings, Mussolini drew the attention of the British to the undeniable rights of Rome on the Dodecanese,²²⁵ as a result of the Lausanne Treaty. Nevertheless, leaving an open door, he said that if Britain desired another settlement on the Dodecanese, it could be done only through compensation to Italy since his country was already in an unsatisfactory position with the existent territorial settlements.²²⁶ The British argued this compensation issue with the Greeks later on. Athens rejected the idea of economic concessions to Italy on the grounds that economic privileges held the danger of being a satellite of Rome in

²²¹ *The Times*, 22 February 1924.

²²² The National Archives, FO 286/1024. "Memorandum on the Dodecanese Question," 22 February 1928.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.* Actually, the islands and the Mediterranean balance of power had always been an issue since the Italian occupation of the islands in 1912.

²²⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Lettera da Mussolini*," (Letter from Mussolini), 4 January 1924.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

the region to an extent that Italy could even force Greece to be a part of a venture against Turkey.²²⁷

Actually, in the first half of 1924, the Dodecanese negotiations reached a standstill owing to the demands of the parties. According to Italy, the British were clearly on the side of Greece, which could not put any pressure on Italy regarding the islands unless they were supported.²²⁸ This idea reflected the truth together with the strategic concerns of the British in the sense that officials in London were trying hard to compel Italy to give up the Dodecanese. One of the most important indicators of this stance was the British combination of the Jubaland²²⁹ issue with the Dodecanese.

According to the British, the issue of the territorial amendment in Somalia should have been handled together with the future of the Dodecanese in terms of their withdrawal to Greece since both these two issues existed in the Treaty of London of 1915.²³⁰ Italy, resisted this idea throughout the period of the negotiation, stating that these two issues were completely separate since the rights

²²⁷ The National Archives, FO, 286/896, "Telegram from British Embassy, Rome to Foreign Office, 'Future of the Dodecanese,'" 31 July 1924. Actually, a year later the direction of Greek foreign policy would be different in a way that Athens tried to make an agreement for a venture against Turkey, as would be seen below.

²²⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Questione Dodecanneso*," (The Question of Dodecanese), 23 February 1924.

²²⁹ Jubaland is an area in Somalia also known as Azania. At the end of the nineteenth century Jubaland became a part of British East Africa colony. According to the Treaty of London (1915), which regulated the terms and conditions of the Italian participation in the First World War on the side of the Triple Entente, Jubaland would become a colony of Italy if Rome decided to participate in the war. However, the British did not keep their promises and the region became one of trump cards during the negotiations on the Dodecanese in 1924. It should be noted that Jubaland issue was not resolved together with the Dodecanese, it was separately given to Italy in 1925.

²³⁰ *The Times*, 22 February 1924.

of Italy in Jubaland had come out of war situation.²³¹ According to them, issue of the Dodecanese should have been handled between Greece and Italy since the previous formal agreements had been made bilaterally.²³² As can be seen, a conflict in the negotiation process took place even over the terms of the procedure.

Beyond this clash between Britain and Italy in terms of the nature of the negotiation, knottiness in the ideas, statements and the documents about a future settlement also stood out. In this sense, for instance, the British archival documents indicate that “Italy proposed to keep Rhodes, Kos, Leros, and Kastellorizo plus a few almost inhabited rocks forming part of the group,”²³³ due to their strategic values and capacity to become naval bases in the Mediterranean. However, according to the Mussolini’s explanations highlighted in the press, Italy did not have any intention of transferring the islands at all.²³⁴ If Italy were to give the islands to anybody, it would be Turkey, from whom it had received them.²³⁵

Indeed, although such a transfer was not an option at the time, Mussolini repeated this opinion on other platforms, probably in order to show his determination about the Aegean. But, it is understood that Mussolini’s explanations led to expectations in some circles of Turkey. For example, *Vakit* published an article, stating that Italy annexed the major islands of the Dodecanese and would restore the rest to Turkey.²³⁶

²³¹ *The Times*, 10 June 1924.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ The National Archives, FO 286/1024. “Memorandum on the Dodecanese Question,” 22 February 1928.

²³⁴ *The Times*, 13 May 1924.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Stampa Turca sul Dodecanneso*,” (Turkish Press about the Dodecanese), 8 October 1924.

Both the Turkish and Greek presses published similar articles about the issue that either Turkey or Italy officially denied later on.²³⁷ It was obvious that Italy did not have any intentions in this respect; however, Turkey followed the developments carefully even if it was no longer a party to the negotiations. Italian diplomats in Turkey stated that officials in Ankara asked frequently about the fate of the Dodecanese negotiations.²³⁸ The official position of Turkey is not evident in the archival resources; yet, Italy always used the Turkish card in the negotiation process claiming that the Turks, who preferred Italians near Turkish territory rather than Greeks, should have been taken into consideration.²³⁹

Italy formally annexed the Dodecanese in late September 1924, after its ratification of the Lausanne Treaty in August, without any transfer of rights, thus, settling this multifaceted issue regardless of the above-mentioned negotiations. In this way, the question of the Dodecanese was closed until the Second World War, although the Greek claims continued to be asserted through different channels throughout the period.

As can be seen, just after the Lausanne Treaty, two issues came to the scene in terms of the Dodecanese. On the one hand, despite the existence of a settlement, Britain, Italy, and Greece continued to negotiate the status of the Dodecanese based on the Greek claims on the islands, until the Italian ratification of Lausanne. In this respect, Turkey was not involved in the negotiation process,

²³⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Dodecanneso*,” (the Dodecanese), 27 September 1924.

²³⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Conversazione Adnan Bey- Montagna su Questione Dodecanneso e Giubaland*,” (Conversation between Adnan Bey- Montagna about the Question of Dodecanese and Giubaland), 18 March 1924.

²³⁹ The National Archives, FO 286/1024, “Memorandum on the Dodecanese Question,” 22 February 1928.

but followed the developments closely. On the other hand, the islets around Kastellorizo emerged as a problem just after signing of Lausanne, becoming a scene of mutual occupations. For the settlement of this issue, the parties had to wait for the 1930s, because the utmost attention with regard to the region was headed towards the militarization of the islands at that time.

The Militarization of the Dodecanese: Turkish Foreign and Security Policies in Response

At the same time that Turkey was following the results of the negotiations about the sovereignty of the Dodecanese, it was also observing what was taking place on the opposite coast attentively, because apart from the political reorganization in the islands, ongoing military undertakings became an important concern. This anxiety, which was very important for the most of the foreign and security policy initiatives of Ankara, can only be understood if the general orientation of Italian foreign policy of the time is known.

Italy had been the “least of the Great Powers” in European arena after its much debated late unification.²⁴⁰ Even if the least one, colonial expansion had been a major drive for Italian foreign policy from the 1880s, not being different from the other European powers of the time. The case of Libya, as explained in the

²⁴⁰ *Risorgimento* means “resurgence” which implies the political unification of the Italian city states in 1870, thus the formation of modern Italy. For more information about the Italian foreign policy after *Risorgimento*, see C. J. Lowe and F. Marzari, *Italian Foreign Policy 1870-1940* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1975); and R. J. B. Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

previous chapter, was a direct result of this understanding. Therefore, as Bosworth suggests, the foreign policy of Italy under fascism was not different from that of the previous periods; it was simply the the last phase of typical Italian foreign policy after *Risorgimento*.²⁴¹ This last phase, however, could be differentiated in terms of its dynamic style and violent tone as opposed to the traditional expansionism of the previous era on the basis of the balance of power dynamics.²⁴² This cult of dynamism aimed at resurrecting the Roman Empire beginning from 1922, based on *mare nostrum* (our sea) strategy, which depended on domination of two seas; the Mediterranean and the Adriatic.²⁴³

This aggressive and expansionist Fascist foreign policy depended largely on military power,²⁴⁴ which manifested itself even in 1923 with the Fiume and Corfu crises that Rome did not abstain from using military power in order to be able to reach the above-mentioned aim.²⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, this direction of foreign policy also had profound impacts on Turkey as a neighboring country, because Mussolini's Italy regarded Anatolia as a possible target for colonization,²⁴⁶ due to the fragile post-war condition of Turkey.

²⁴¹ Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World*, pp.36-37.

²⁴² H. James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1940* (Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Press, 1997), p.18.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ For a good account of the relationship between Fascist foreign policy and the military, see John Gooch, *Mussolini and His Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922-1940* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²⁴⁵ The Fiume crisis was about the Italian threat of use of force against Belgrad, for the recognition of Italian sovereignty over the region, although Fiume was a "free state." The Corfu crisis, on the other hand, was about the Italian invasion of the island based on the problematic bilateral relations with Greece. While in Fiume crisis Italy ended up with a victory, Corfu was evacuated in order not to risk a war with the British. For more information about these two issues, see Joel Blatt, "France and the Corfu-Fiume Crisis of 1923," *Historian* 50, no.2 (February 1988), pp. 234-259.

²⁴⁶ Barlas, "Friend or Foes?" pp.232-237.

It is argued in this study that the most important dynamic of this Italian threat was the adjacent Dodecanese Islands. Turkey acted as if the offensive through this near geography could come at any time. Therefore, the Dodecanese threat against Turkey became one of the keys of Turkish strategic thinking, which was formulated as a response to the developments on the islands, owing to the dense military undertakings of a revisionist aggressive power in the area, which did not hesitate to declare its aims in the Near East.

The Italian insistence on the Dodecanese had stemmed from the desire of Rome to control a strategic stronghold in the Levant. Thus, the Italians began to assess the islands based on their military values since 1923. This position can be seen during the negotiations on the sovereignty of the Dodecanese, with Britain and Greece in post-Lausanne period. According to the considerations of the Italian officials, Italy should not have abandoned Rhodes, Leros, Stampalia as well as Kastellorizo not only due to their strategic positions in the eastern Mediterranean but also due to their harbor capacities for the Italian navy.²⁴⁷ Likewise, the dominance of the military thinking about the islands was also obvious in the own words of Mussolini, who said that Italy should not have taken an initiative in disarming Kastellorizo, on which French guns were situated unless Turkey asked specifically for this,²⁴⁸ although countries would exchange letters about the disarmament of the island when they signed the Lausanne Treaty.

²⁴⁷ It should be reminded that ongoing discussions took place amongst British, Italian and Greek officials about the future of the islands even after Lausanne. Therefore, these assessments also reflect the uncertainty about the fate of the region. ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Sistemazione delle Isole Egee*,” (Organization of the Aegean Islands), 30 May 1923; “*Pro-Memoria*,” (Memorandum), n.d.

²⁴⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 896, “*Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo), 28 May 1923.

The discomfort of Turkey about the military understanding of the islands dated back to 1923 and the Italians knew this uneasiness. For example, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had rejected a demand of an Italian General who had wanted to stop in Fethiye (Makri) while going from Leros to Kastellorizo, on the grounds that such a stop would alarm Turkey.²⁴⁹ Turkish sensitivity was closely related to the militarization project in the Dodecanese.

Italy began to constitute an arrangement on the islands as early as 1923 although it did not annex the region formally, and it was still in the process of negotiation over the fate of the Dodecanese with Britain and Greece. This arrangement, or systematization as the Italians called, was closely related to the military settlement. In 1923, the Italian military structure of the Dodecanese was tied to the ninth regiment in Bari on the mainland Italy; in other words, a separate command for the islands did not exist. Within this structure, while Rhodes was regarded as the center of the islands' military framework, Leros, specifically the Porto Laki (*Porto Lago*), was formulated as a future naval base where the barracks and air hangars had already begun to be built.²⁵⁰ Leros would gradually be the backbone of the Dodecanese military structure, which would be a command headquarter, separate from Bari in the 1930s.

This military systematization became much more concrete in 1924. The first three months of this year corresponded to military shipping between Italy, specifically the Bari division, as stated above, and the Dodecanese. According to the archival documents, in addition to the dispatch of the fighter groups to the

²⁴⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Visita del Capo di Stato Maggiore della Marina al Dodecanneso*," (The Visit of Chief of Marine Forces to the Dodecanese), 29 October 1923.

²⁵⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Visita a Lero*," (Visit to Leros), 19 October 1923.

islands, movements of other military classes like the engineers or the *carabinieri* (gendarmes) who would be used for local necessities came about.²⁵¹ From February to the end of the summer, the organization and the number of troops in the islands increased.

Various sources show that in terms of man power there were approximately 1400 troops in the Dodecanese, in March 1924.²⁵² This number increased twofold by the end of the May,²⁵³ and this trend continued throughout the year. The majority of the forces and recently dispatched machine guns were concentrated on Rhodes, the center of the Dodecanese, together with Kos and Kalimnos.²⁵⁴ The future military fortress of the Dodecanese, namely Leros, did not have sufficient military man power yet with the exception of the construction process that had been initiated there.²⁵⁵

While these movements were being executed on the islands, Turkey became suspicious about the Italian actions on the opposite shore and took some measures in response. Obviously, this period of Turkey reflects the assumption that if a particular state without necessary diplomatic allies faces a security problem; it tends to pay a good deal of attention to its military organization.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Forze Militari nel Dodecanneso*," (Military Forces in the Dodecanese), 25 February 1924.

²⁵² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Presidio Militare del Dodecanneso*," (Garrisons of the Dodecanese), 17 March 1924.

²⁵³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Truppe nel Dodecanneso*," (Troops in the Dodecanese), 4 June 1924.

²⁵⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Truppe a Rodi e Distaccamenti*," (Troops in Rhodes and the Details), 12 June 1924.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Barry R. Posen, "The Sources of Military Doctrine," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p.39.

Parallel to this hypothesis, Turkey, in response to almost all military movements on the islands, began war preparations in the coastal regions, beginning in 1924.

For example, in February, Turkish generals were in Izmir for war games designed for a possible Italian attack to Turkey from the West,²⁵⁷ which was supposed to occur via the Dodecanese. It seems that the the Italians considered the war games in Izmir important. They voiced their concerns about the undertakings while Turkey described the activity as the study of tactical and strategic problems.²⁵⁸

Actually, this period marked a turning point in Turkish defense undertakings in the West. It was obvious that Turkish coasts were vulnerable to a sudden attack owing to the fact that with the exception of Foça Gulf, no war apparatus was present in the south or north of İzmir in Western Anatolia,²⁵⁹ which was supposedly one of the areas facing a military threat. After this time, however, Turkey began to fortify the coastal areas, from the northern Aegean, with the exception of the Dardanelles, to the end point of southern Anatolia.

The state followed the above-mentioned dispatch of soldiers to Rhodes in the end of May and June through the intelligence activities,²⁶⁰ and the Turkish press highlighted these movements.²⁶¹ The articles published in several Turkish newspapers, like *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, *Vatan*, and *İleri* generally suggested that the landing of troops in Rhodes was related to an imminent attack on western Anatolia

²⁵⁷ Barlas and Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean during the Interwar Era*, p.41.

²⁵⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1700, “*Convegno Militare a Smirne*,” (Military Meeting in İzmir), 9 February 1924 and 19 February 1924.

²⁵⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1700, “*Mustafa Kemal e ...Militari*,” (Mustafa Kemal and Military ...), 20 February 1924.

²⁶⁰ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/236.594..12, 01 June 1924.

²⁶¹ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/236.594..13, 01 June 1924.

and additionally these preparations largely depended on the British collaboration with Italy based on the Mosul question.²⁶²

Although the consular offices of Italy protested the stance of the press, which stressed a possible threat from the Dodecanese,²⁶³ it was not just the Turkish press that called attention to this mobilization. For example, even British newspapers like the *Morning Post* underlined the naval dispatches to Leros, which had been chosen as the naval base of the Dodecanese, as well as both Greek and Turkish concerns about the target of this fortification.²⁶⁴

It was true that the complexity in the Aegean had led also the Greeks to strengthen their borders owing to the strain in this relationship at the time.²⁶⁵ Despite the Italian noting about the baselessness of these arguments and despite the complexity of the existing intelligence, it was certain that these concerns directed the actions of the Turkish officials. Nearly on the same days as the articles circulated in public, the Turkish Chief of General Staff, Fevzi Paşa (Çakmak) was called to Ankara for a consultation about the transfer of troops to Rhodes.²⁶⁶

Not only the meetings among the officials from the higher echelons of Turkish politics, but also the initiatives of the defense mechanism prove that Turkey was expecting an attack upcoming from the Dodecanese in the middle of 1924. According to the day-to-day intelligence of the Italians, the Turkish army was on the move in the coastal areas. For example, in those days of high tension in

²⁶² ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1700, “*Presunti Concentramenti Truppe Italiane*,” (Presumed Concentrations of the Italian Troops), 1 June 1924.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Base Navale a Lero*,” (Naval Base in Leros), 30 May 1924.

²⁶⁵ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/236.594..28, 21 July 1924.

²⁶⁶ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/236.594..11, 31 May 1924.

June and July, the bay of Edremit in the Balıkesir region was fortified with a battery of cannons as well as with machine guns.²⁶⁷

In terms of fortifications and war plans, the southern and western Anatolia was not different. While some airfields were built near Selçuk, specifically in Ayasuluk, it was stated that 6000 men were increased to 12,000, near Manisa and Menemen in İzmir, together with the construction of a wooden bridge for the landing of cannons at Gaziemir.²⁶⁸ In addition to these military concentrations in terms of men and weapons, the existence of the chief military officers in the İzmir region during this time period was an important indication of the serious nature of the course of events.

In June and July, when the defensive initiatives of Turkey reached at a peak point, another place on which the Turkish attentions were focused was Söke, in the province of Aydın. At the beginning of June 1924, Greek newspapers had even claimed the occupation of Söke by the divisions of Rhodes based on false information from Samos.²⁶⁹ Although the Italians considered this information as “apocryphal,” it was meaningful that three Turkish regiments were sent to Söke together with the officials from General Staff nearly in the same month.²⁷⁰

As opposed to the Aegean coast, which was militarily active, the region of Antalya was rather calm in the first half of 1924. The Italian documents do not

²⁶⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1701, “*Italia e Turchia*,” (Italy and Turkey), 7 July 1924.

²⁶⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1701, “n.t.” 28 June 1924. It is important to note that Turkish defensive line was constituted in Alaşehir, near Manisa, in the case of an embarkation.

²⁶⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Notizie Apocrife da Atene di Sbarchi Italiani in Anatolia*,” (Apocryphal Notifications from Athens about an Italian landing in Anatolia), 13 June 1924.

²⁷⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1701, “*Italia e Turchia*,” (Italy and Turkey) 7 July 1924.

indicate a special movement there.²⁷¹ This situation also would change in the second half of the year when both Muğla and Antalya became the next target areas for the Turkish army. In Muğla, several areas, like Marmaris, Datça, and Fethiye, which faced the islands of the Dodecanese, were equipped with arms similar to the above-mentioned areas.²⁷² The threat from the islands had been regarded as a danger to such an extent that in some places like Datça, in addition to the normal military proceedings, military officials had distributed arms to the people in order for them to defend themselves.²⁷³

In Antalya, on the other hand, the island authorities confirmed that after July, Turkish officers had begun to perpetrate secret military undertakings in the region, in response to the armaments in the Dodecanese in general.²⁷⁴ In reality, the reason for the activity in the Antalya region seemed to stem from the rising rumors and intelligences about the armaments on Kastellorizo, which was supposed to have been cleared of the weapons, based on the letters exchanged between Turkey and Italy during the signing period of the Lausanne Treaty.

The news in the *Antalya* daily, which had been publishing articles on a possible landing for the whole period, about four howitzer guns²⁷⁵ in Kastellorizo that could be seen from the Anatolian coast and about recent road construction

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1704, “*Armamenti Turchi*,” (Turkish Armaments), 30 July 1924.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1704, “*Armamenti Turchi nella zona di Adalia*,” (Turkish Armaments in the Zone of Adalia), 5 September 1924.

²⁷⁵ Howitzer is a piece of artillery which could be regarded as a kind between gun and mortar. It had been used almost until the end of the Second World War.

work therein were important in this respect.²⁷⁶ In response to this information which also spread to the İstanbul press, the governor of the Dodecanese, Mario Lago,²⁷⁷ informed the Italian consular network that no howitzers existed on the islands with the exception of Leros and the roads being constructed were just for walking, without any strategic importance.²⁷⁸

Although *Antalya* published a denial based on the pressure from the state later on, it is necessary to note that the Turkish officials could not ignore the activities in Kastellorizo. The Turkish military undertakings were moved towards certain points in the province of Antalya. In this context, in addition to the transfer of soldiers, especially to the areas of Kırkgöz, Kaş, and Manavgat, guns were relocated over the ruined roads which were being repaired at the same time.²⁷⁹ The officials from the General Staff in Antalya followed the transfer of guns and rifles closely and oversaw the duty of collecting horses from the people in the region.²⁸⁰

As can be seen from the data of 1924, the Turkish military reaction to the armed reorganization and activity on the Dodecanese began from the northern Aegean coast and reached to the coasts of Mediterranean. Indeed, the trend in the coastal defense of Turkey was the militarization of the areas near the islands for which intelligence about fortification activity existed. But, sending soldiers and

²⁷⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Armamenti a Castelrosso*,” (The Armaments in Kastellorizo), 20 August 1924.

²⁷⁷ Mario Lago was the Italian governor of the Dodecanese Islands beginning from 1922 until 1936 on which Cesare Maria de Vecchi succeeded him.

²⁷⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Armamenti a Castelrosso*,” (The Armaments in Kastellorizo), 24 August 1924.

²⁷⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1704, “*Armamenti Turchi nella zona di Adalia*,” (The Turkish Armaments in the Zone of Antalya) 26 August 1924. This document emphasizes that the transfer of the guns were realized with the ones from Dumlupınar the Greeks left after the Turkish victory in 1922.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

armaments to these regions was not the only approach. Instead, Turkey did not hesitate to lay mines to the shores of Marmaris, Finike, Arapsuyu (in Antalya), Datça, and Gaziemir (in İzmir).²⁸¹ These were the ways that Turkey tried to deter an attack coming from the islands with which Ankara felt on the verge of war.

The militarization of the Western coasts intensified throughout 1925, in response to further activities on the islands. However, neither the attitude of Turkey in the region nor the accelerating preparation of Italy in the Dodecanese especially after December 1924 can be understood coherently without taking the other diplomatic issues of Turkey into account. The Mosul problem between Turkey and Britain was a key factor in this regard. While the tension ascended in the Eastern border zones, Turkey also felt close to a war more than ever in the coastal areas. How Mosul turned into a problem for Turkey not only in terms of the Eastern borders but also in terms of the Western coasts at the same time was closely related to the possibility of collaboration among Britain, Italy, and even Greece, as will be analyzed in the following pages.

The Great Power interest in Mosul dated back to the late nineteenth century due to its strategic location especially towards the Near East and South East Asia as well as to natural resources, specifically petroleum.²⁸² This region, which the British occupied after the Mudros Armistice, had been one of the issues of the Lausanne Conference without a concrete solution, yet with a program of subsequent diplomatic negotiation between the parties which would be handed

²⁸¹ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1704, “*Armamenti Turchi*,” (Turkish Armaments), 30 July 1924.

²⁸² In order to comprehend the importance of Mosul especially for the British, see Mim Kemal Öke, *Musul Meselesi Kronolojisi (1918-1926)* (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1987), p.10-16.

over to the League of Nations in case of a failure in bilateral negotiations.²⁸³ At the end of the process, the parties sent the case to the League of Nations as had been foreseen due to the failure of diplomacy, resulting in the conclusion of the problem in favor of Britain in 1926.

Until 1926, Mosul constituted a significant foreign policy problem for Turkey as a newly founded state. From the military point of view, tension in the border zones had escalated.²⁸⁴ In other words, a military clash in the east of Turkey with the British forces emerged as a possibility. When the situation in the eastern region was considered together with the above-mentioned environment of western and southwestern Anatolia due to the Dodecanese, the difficulties that Turkey experienced in this period with limited military resources can be understood better. However, this complexity in Turkish security and foreign policy should not be comprehended as stemming from simultaneous, yet separate issues. This dissertation argues that the Mosul question was closely related to the Dodecanese problem of Turkey, especially after December 1924, as a certain degree of collaboration existed between Britain and Italy. Actually, Greece was also a part of this cooperation at some point, during the reign of General Pangalos.

Turkey had suspected possible cooperation between Italy and Britain since 1924. Indeed, such a concurrence seemed logical since it reflected a win-win

²⁸³ For more information about the Mosul negotiations during the Lausanne Conference, see Sevtap Demirci, "Turco-British Diplomatic Manoeuvres on the Mosul Question in the Lausanne Conference, 1922-1923," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 1 (April 2010), pp.57-71.

²⁸⁴ Actually, whether Turkey had considered the war as a serious option is still an issue that the historians discuss. In this respect, the plan of Cafer Tayyar Paşa to occupy Mosul is the most common case that was told in the books. For instance, see Öke, p.139. Regardless of the occupation plans, Turkish army was on the move in the Eastern cities for security reasons.

situation for both parties. In terms of the British, who wanted to intimidate Turkey in order to obtain the desired result for Mosul, the activity of Italy in the Dodecanese threatening Turkey was useful. On the other hand, the Mosul crisis was an opportunity for Italy which sought colonial expansion in Turkey, for which Rome expected disintegration without the consolidation of the Republic during this process.²⁸⁵

Turkey's doubts escalated in 1925 when a series of meetings, the first of which took place in December 1924, were held between Mussolini and Chamberlain. It was usually thought that these two agreed on diplomatic and economic cooperation in Turkey, though no written evidence exists about this plan in the British archives.²⁸⁶ However, this collaboration is clear in the account of the Italian War Minister, who had stated that Mussolini had asked him to study the means and requirements of a probable war against Turkey.²⁸⁷ Likewise, Greek archival resources suggest that Mussolini had promised 250,000 men to Britain in case of a landing in Asia Minor during these meetings.²⁸⁸ Therefore, when discussing the developments in 1925, this understanding between Britain and Italy should be kept in mind since Turkey formulated its stance as being faced with threats both from the east, and from the west.

Then, what was happening militarily in the Aegean Sea in the light of this diplomatic understanding? 1925 saw further development of the military activities

²⁸⁵ Barlas and Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean*, p.85.

²⁸⁶ Peter Edwards, "The Austen Chamberlain-Mussolini Meetings", *The Historical Journal* 14, no.1 (1971), pp.153-154.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. p.154.

²⁸⁸ Antonis Klapsis, "Attempting to Revise the Treaty of Lausanne: Greek Foreign Policy and Italy during the Pangalos Dictatorship, 1925–1926," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 25, no.2 (May 2014), p.244.

in the Dodecanese, specifically in Leros. The construction of the components of naval base on Leros had already begun in 1923, as stated above, but the peak point of this construction process corresponded to 1925. The communications between the Naval Ministry and Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of this year stress again and again the military and political importance of the base.²⁸⁹ According to the reports, the importance of Leros was based on its formulation as a supply point for the convoys within the Mediterranean, along the route of the Dardanelles, the Aegean Sea, Italy, and Libya.²⁹⁰ In that respect, buoys, moorings places, water supply installation points, deposits of carbon and naphtha on floating, a warehouse for artillery, two thousand tons of barges, and a small station for a radio telegram had already been constructed or transferred to Porto Laki.

The novelty of 1925 in terms of the undertakings on Leros generally stemmed from the desire to improve the aviation facilities. According to the officials, Greece and Turkey were developing their air forces. While the former constructed an airplane factory, the latter's air force was increased to nearly a hundred aircraft. Therefore, the aviation in the islands, particularly on Leros as the military stronghold, should have been developed with regard to the balance of force in the Aegean.²⁹¹

In order to be a major aviation power in the Aegean and in the Mediterranean in general, Rome constructed a seadrome, an apron with slide, a hangar, a warehouse, and several barracks on Leros for the use of two squadrons to

²⁸⁹ ASMAE Pacco Dodecanneso 987, "*Isola di Leros*," (Leros Island), 8 April 1925.

²⁹⁰ ASMAE Pacco Dodecanneso 987, "*Aviazione a Lero*," (Aviation in Leros), 25 June 1925.

²⁹¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, "*Aviazione in Egeo*," (Aviation in the Aegean), 10 June 1925.

begin with.²⁹² The naval base on Leros with a strong aviation capacity was very important for the politicians not only in the islands but also in the concerning ministries in Rome. Thus, which institution would be responsible for this base became a highly contentious matter.²⁹³

It can be argued that Leros turned into the most significant of the islands and the most important achievement in the Dodecanese from a military point of view in 1925 and this would continue to be the case in the subsequent years. The growing focus on Leros did not mean that works on other islands stopped. On the contrary, the operations in other parts of the Aegean continued diligently. For example, while the construction of barracks on Rhodes together with the transfer of soldiers were taking place,²⁹⁴ another military project was going on in Kos in front of Bodrum in Muğla,²⁹⁵ as a different point from the previous year's undertakings.

Again, claims about the remilitarization of Kastellorizo appeared in the Turkish press and the Italians denied it through a verbal note.²⁹⁶ The Italian diplomatic circles attentively followed the Turkish press, both the local and national ones, since alarming voices about the undertakings in the Dodecanese were consistently existent in the newspapers. In 1925, even the comic journals wrote about the Dodecanese armaments. For instance, *Akbaba*, depicted Mussolini

²⁹² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, “*Aviazione in Egeo*,” (Aviation in the Aegean), 22 July 1925 and “*Aviazione a Lero*,” (Aviation in Leros), 25 June 1925.

²⁹³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, “*Base Navale a Leros*,” (Naval Base in Leros), 1925.

²⁹⁴ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/253.708..35, 16 April 1925.

²⁹⁵ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/253.708..22, 1 April 1925.

²⁹⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, “*Nota Verbale*,” (Verbal Note), 22 December 1925.

sitting on top of Rhodes with the title: “from the ongoing news: Italian fortifications on Rhodes.”²⁹⁷



Figure 2. *Akbaba*, 1 June 1341 (1925).

The military action on the islands took the answer of military reaction in Turkish coastal areas, not being different from the previous year. For example, the same logic about the Turkish defense strategy in terms of strengthening the areas confronting the fortified islands could be seen also in the above-mentioned case of Kos. As a response to the fortifications on Kos, the Turkish authorities equipped Bodrum with a battalion of soldiers and prohibited the entrance of the civilians to some areas of the town in such a way that, according to the Italian intelligence,

²⁹⁷ *Akbaba*, “İkide birde çıkan hevaldislerden: Rodos'ta İtalyan Tehşidatı,” 1 June 1341 (1925).

even the civilian officials were permitted to enter those regions only every three/four days.²⁹⁸

The ambitions of Greece toward Turkey revived by General Pangalos who took the power in Athens after a coup d'état in June 1925,²⁹⁹ further complicated the difficult position of Turkey in 1925, which dealt not only with the British in the east but also with the Italians in the west. Since 1923, Turkish-Greek relations had been experiencing difficulties, specifically owing to problems arising from the population exchange. After seizing power, General Pangalos not only hardened the stance towards Turkey on these issues, but also tried to come closer to Britain and Italy, which could help him to achieve his territorial ambitions in Anatolia within the existing conditions.³⁰⁰ The Foreign Office documents state:

In September 1925, Signor Grandi the Italian Minister of Interior of the time, expressed to M. Rentis at Geneva, Minister for Foreign Affairs in General Pangalos' government, who also represented Greece at the League of Nations, the desire of the Italian government for a rapprochement between the two countries with a view to collaboration in Asia Minor.³⁰¹

Parallel to this, General Pangalos' memoirs also indicate that he planned to attack to Turkey with a collaboration of Italy and Britain.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, "Notizie Militari dalla Turchia," (Military Notifications from Turkey), 3 July 1925.

²⁹⁹ Pangalos remained in power until he was overthrown in 1926.

³⁰⁰ Klapsis, p.242.

³⁰¹ The National Archives, FO 286/1024, "Situation in the Dodecanese Islands," 22 February 1928.

³⁰² The Memoirs of General Pangalos at issue, Αναδημοσίευση απο το Αρχειον Θεοδωρου Παγκαλον,(τομος δευτερος 1925-1952) (Αθηνα, Κεδρος, 1974). Eng. *Publications from the Archives of Theodoros Pangalos* (v.2, 1925-1952) (Athens: Kedros, 1974) quoted by Damla Demirözü, Savaşın Barışa Giden Yol, Atatürk-Venizelos Dönemi Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkileri (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), p.37.

While Athens and Rome came to an understanding during meetings that took place between their representatives, beginning with the second half of 1925, Britain, though collaborating with Italy, remained distant from such cooperation since it feared the possible direction that Greek-Italian link could take.³⁰³ Yet, Italy and Greece continued to make plans about a possible attack on Turkey until Chamberlain vetoed Mussolini on the issue in 1926, when the Mosul question was solved, eliminating the British interest in such an attack. Interestingly, while this veto would reflect on the attitude of Mussolini, General Pangalos, until he was overthrown, would seek the ways to attack Turkey, even planning to collaborate with Yugoslavia.³⁰⁴

When the Greek factor during 1925 is added to the picture, the difficulties that Turkey experienced in the Aegean Sea become much more understandable, since Turkey was a neighbor with Greece not only through the Thracian border, but also through the Aegean islands just above the Dodecanese group, for which the Lausanne Treaty had a demilitarization clause.³⁰⁵ Turkish officials had already begun to notice military activity on the islands in question before General Pangalos came to power, especially during the crisis about the deportation of the recently elected Patriarch from Turkey since he fell under the category of refugee, according to the Turkish interpretation of the population exchange.

For instance, during this diplomatic tension, Greece had fortified the northern Aegean Islands like Chios and Lesbos facing Anatolia and also sent

³⁰³ Klapsis, p.247.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.253-255.

³⁰⁵ For the related 12th and 13th articles of Lausanne Treaty, see Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Lausanne Peace Treaty," <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i-political-clauses.en.mfa> (accessed June 22, 2013).

troops to them.³⁰⁶ Parallel to its security understanding vis-à-vis the Dodecanese, Turkey had sent troops to the coasts of north Aegean facing the islands like the towns of Ayvalık, Dikili, and Bergama.³⁰⁷ The seizure of Greek rule by General Pangalos, who tried to collaborate with the Italians in the light of revisionist aims, further alarmed Turkey. It began to follow also these islands attentively, as it did so for the Dodecanese. The military dispatches continued during this time scale also, especially based on Lesbos.³⁰⁸

Particularly the second half of 1925 cannot be comprehended without taking all these diplomatic contacts and collaborations into consideration. Italy, Greece, and Britain carried out frequent activities just off the western coasts of Anatolia with their ships in the Aegean Sea.³⁰⁹ Although Turkey tried to answer these threats with military measures such as grand war games in the western Anatolia, especially in the area of Manisa in October 1925, or the big fortification work under construction in İzmir,³¹⁰ the counterparties knew that Turkey had a scarcity of soldiers in these areas because its troops had also been mobilized in the eastern part of the country,³¹¹ not only owing to the Mosul dispute but also specific event of Sheik Sait rebellion in the region, on which the British support is a big question mark, again.³¹²

³⁰⁶ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30.10.0.0/253.708..17, 28 March 1925.

³⁰⁷ ASMAE, Pacco 1709 Turchia, “*Incidente del Patriarcato- Misuri Militare Turche*,” (Incident of Patriarch-Turkish Military Measures), 26 February 1925.

³⁰⁸ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30.10.0.0/253.708..64, 7 September 1925.

³⁰⁹ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, 30..10.0.0 /101.654..14, 12 September 1925.

³¹⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1710, “*Grandi Manovre Turche*,” (Grand Turkish Maneuver), 22 October 1925.

³¹¹ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1710, “*Misure Militari in Turchia*,” (Military Measures in Turkey), 22 October 1925.

³¹² For instance, according to Coşar and Demirci, it is naïve to think that the British was not involved in the revolt. Nevin Coşar and Sevtap Demirci, “The Mosul Question and the Turkish

Therefore, it can be concluded that by the end of 1925, Turkey had experienced the most vulnerable epoch of the interwar period because the problem for Turkey in the Aegean had become much more complicated than the sole militarization of the Dodecanese due to the entrance of Britain and Greece onto the scene.

1926 did not begin with novel dynamics either. The condition of being on the verge of war continued especially in the first half of this year. Since the military undertakings were maintained in the Dodecanese in terms of the new construction works such as the one in Scarpanto³¹³ and in terms of the frequent visits of high ranking army officers for the inspection of the army and the navy specifically in Rhodes and Leros;³¹⁴ Turkey maintained its alarmist stance in the coastal areas.

The Italian documents indicate an ongoing fortification process, specifically in İzmir, which had become the backbone of the coastal strategy of Turkey, together with the construction of recently mapped out roads and battery lines for cannons.³¹⁵ It was emphasized that despite the weakness of its navy, Turkey was taking strict land measures in these areas, and in case of a war it could make its land army more powerful with the help of the Russians,³¹⁶ its only

Republic: Before and after the Frontier Treaty, 1926,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no.1 (Jan., 2006), p.127. Considering the British engagement in other uprisings like the ones of Nasturis in Anatolia on the one hand, and the cooperation with the Aegean in order to intimidate Turkey on the other hand, the probability of British existence in the rebellion seems high.

³¹³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Caserma a Scarpanto e Manutenzione degli Immobili Militari nel Dodecanneso*,” (Barrack in Scarpanto and the Maintenance of the Permanent Military in the Dodecanese), 15 November 1926.

³¹⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Proroga Data per Ispezione 9° Reggimento Fanteria in Rodi*,” (Postponement of the Inspection of 9th Infantry Regiment in Rhodes), 22 May 1926.

³¹⁵ ASMAE Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Turchia*,” (Turkey), 1926.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

diplomatic friend at that time. Regardless of the probable help that Turkey could get in case of a war and despite the lack of man power in those areas due to the situation in the east, the government attached a major importance to the coastal defense in a way that similarly in 1926 Turkish officials, like Prime Minister İsmet Paşa (İnönü) travelled to these areas frequently in order to check the progress.³¹⁷

However, the nature of these warlike conditions began to change in the second half of the year. This change could be understood based on two respects. First of all, Turkey accepted the decision of the League of Nations regarding Mosul in favor of Britain in 1926, because it was diplomatically isolated, with various external and internal threats, as the above data designates, on the one hand, and it needed a peaceful consolidation environment as a newly founded and fragile Republic, on the other hand.³¹⁸ This meant the disappearance of one of the adversaries from the scene diplomatically as well as getting rid of the danger of a clash with the British in the east militarily. Thus, Turkey could focus more on the Western defense.

As was stated above, Britain, which had backed the Italian interests in Anatolia during 1925, began to reject any attack on Turkey after the conclusion of the Mosul question. That is to say, the Mosul dynamic between the islands and the Turkish mainland was over in the second half of 1926, yet, after showing how these minor islands had a major influence on Turkish foreign policy.

The second reason involved the Italian military, the organization of which had been changed completely in 1926. This organizational difference in the whole

³¹⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1716 “*Situazione Turchia*,” (Situation in Turkey), 3 April 1926.

³¹⁸ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri, 1919–1926* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1978), pp.301-314.

army had some repercussions in the Dodecanese, especially in terms of the administrative issues,³¹⁹ even if the concentration and the construction in the islands were kept going. The authorities underlined this administrative complexity and the disharmony among the ground, air, and naval forces as the problems in the Dodecanese in 1926. Therefore, in the second half of the year, the Italian officers in the capital or in the islands dealt with the military problems to a great extent.³²⁰ For instance, the commanders of the land army, the navy, and the air forces prepared military programs for the Dodecanese. These programs signified the necessity of rapid improvement both in Rhodes and in Leros, together with the construction of an airport in the latter and aviation camps in the former.³²¹

The fact that nearly all the reports emphasized the air power in the islands as compared to that in Turkey shows that after the resolution for Mosul, Italy began to take the possible power of Turkey on the western coasts more seriously since Turkey gained the ability to dispatch more soldiers and equipment to the western and southwestern Anatolia. Therefore, it is seen that the Italian government focused more on the military problems of the islands after the second half of the year since they may have caused bigger troubles in the changing conditions.

However, even if the dynamics in the Aegean began to change during 1926 in favor of Turkey, the mutual stance of the parties did not transform immediately. On the contrary, the tension, especially in terms of surveillance, intelligence, and

³¹⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Comandi e Presidi in Egeo*,” (Commands and the Garrisons in the Aegean), 25 June 1926.

³²⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Difesa delle Isole Egee*,” (Defence of the Aegean Islands), 15 July 1926.

³²¹ Ibid.

the military projects continued, especially until the second half of 1927 in which the other issues also began to occupy place other than war and military. In other words, although the conditions were different and much more balanced specifically for Turkey after 1926, the military activities continued to be followed with concern, as well as the expectation of an attack.

In terms of the military project, the construction of different parts of the Leros naval base persisted to be one of the concerns of Turkey, the notes on which designated accelerated military activity on Porto Laki with extraordinary measures to prohibit the influx of information.³²² The expectation both in Ankara and in the several journals of the various countries was still of a future war between Turkey and Italy particularly directed from Leros, which was still under development.³²³ Therefore, all the actions of the Italian officials in the Aegean Sea were viewed with suspicion in Turkey.

For instance, Turkey had evaluated the dispatch of a boat for hydrographical survey to Kastellorizo as a sign of a forthcoming war. According to Turkey, the Italian officers were actually making efforts to place cannon on the island to this end.³²⁴ The Italian official communications between Rhodes, Rome, and Istanbul show that the mentioned ship had been genuinely sent for hydrographical activity. For this reason, the Italian ambassador in Turkey complained that if the Italian authorities communicated with the Turkish officials about the actual plan before, they would not have been in the awkward place of

³²² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Dodecanneso e Stampa Ellinica*," (The Dodecanese and the Greek Press), 13 October 1927.

³²³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Commenti Stampa*," (Comments in the Press), 1 July 1927.

³²⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Diffidenze Turche*," (Distrust of Turks), 23 May 1927.

denial for a simple hydrographical work.³²⁵ Indeed, the secrecy about every initiative marked these years, even in the harmless enterprises like the example.

Obviously, military intelligence from the facing shores was always important for all parties. While Turkey had received information from the Dodecanese through the travellers, merchants, and sailors,³²⁶ together with the foreign press and the means of navy; Italy collected information about the coastal regions through its embassies and espionage. Intelligence was important to such an extent that it became a topic of another cartoon in Turkey, depicting the mutual surveillance between the coasts.³²⁷

Despite the deportations or prison sentences for people accused of being spies,³²⁸ neither the activity in Anatolia nor that in the Dodecanese remained secret. However, it can be seen easily that the counter-espionage became much more important especially for Leros in 1926 and 1927. This disturbed Turkish policy makers and led them to produce more surveillance and intelligence methods. Not surprisingly, the island authorities reciprocated.

³²⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Rilievi a Castelrosso*,” (Survey in Kastellorizo), 8 June 1927.

³²⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Turchia 1700, “*Consolati Turchi in Italia ed a Rodi*,” (Turkish Consulates in Italy and Rhodes), 26 September 1924.

³²⁷ Karagöz, “*Ne Yapsak Etrafı Dikiz Etmeyi Unutmayız Çelebi*,” 28 July 1926.

³²⁸ For example a deportation had occurred in Dodecanese for giving information to the Turks, ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Deportazione di Ebu Muzaffer e Hacı Rıza*,” (Deportation of Ebu Muzaffer and Hacı Rıza), 18 October 1923. Likewise, Turkey had sent a Turkish citizen for being a spy of Italy. ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, “*Lettera ad Orsini*,” (Letter to Orsini), 31 March 1927.



Figure 3. “*Ne Yapsak Etrafı Dikiz Etmeyi Unutmayız Çelebi*” Karagöz, 28 July 1926.

At a time when the press was talking about grand military work on Leros, the governor of the Dodecanese was making proposals about the severe restrictions on the entrance of the ships to the naval base on Porto Laki and to other military zones.³²⁹ The reason for this proposal, above all, was basically the previous entrance of the Turkish Consul together with three British officials who had taken photos of the base and drawn the layout of the military buildings as well as edifices of the batteries.³³⁰ These proposals included specific restrictions to travel for the people on Leros and the obligation of the accurate travel documents for passengers, especially Turks, the main enemy, and people from Egypt where many Dodecanese irredentists lived.³³¹

³²⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Porto Lago Zona Militare*,” (Military Zone in Porto Laki), 24 December 1926.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Spinaggio a Porto Lago*,” (Espionage in Porto Lago), 18 February 1926.

Despite the Italian officials took some measures against counterespionage for Leros and sent counterespionage officers to the island,³³² the suspicions about the activities of Turkey for intelligence and surveillance continued. The Dodecanese authorities generally attributed the detections of the submarines as well as torpedo boats in the Aegean to the Turks,³³³ and regarded the Turkish consulate on Rhodes as an espionage and provocation office with many agents who were tasked with the “deformed military notifications.”³³⁴ The mistrust about the Turkish consul and consulate increased to such an extent that the governor of Rhodes, while describing the Turkish consul Celaledin Bey, stated that he was taking money for his intelligence service for which he was only responsible to Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk).³³⁵

However, according to the Turks, the Dodecanesian authorities were involved in similar activities. When Minister of Foreign Affairs Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) complained about the military intelligence activities to the Italian authorities, the Italians replied that this was the illusion of the local Turkish authorities who were always suspicious and saw every Italian as a spy, who had no agenda but to attack Turkey.³³⁶ But, it should be noted that this same official to whom Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) talked requested the examination of this activity from

³³² ASMAE, PaccoDodecanneso 990, “*Contro Spinaggio a Porto Lago*,” (Counterespionage in Porto Lago), 14 March 1927.

³³³ ASMAE Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Avvistamento Sommergibile*,” (Spotting of a Submarine), 9 November 1927.

³³⁴ ASMAE Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Attività e Ostilità tra Turchia e Dodecanneso*,” (Activity and Hostility between Turkey and the Dodecanese), 27 February 1927.

³³⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Djelaleddin Bey- Vice Console di Turchia a Rodi*,” (Celaledin Bey-Vice Consul of Turkey in Rhodes), 17 June 1927.

³³⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Attività di Agenti del Governo Italiano nel Dodecanneso*,” (Activity of the Italian Agents in the Dodecanese), 14 February 1927.

the Dodecanesian authorities either in terms of its moderation or in terms of improving the means since the Turks already knew the spies and since the Turkish authorities were able to identify them as soon as they appeared.³³⁷

The intelligence and surveillance activities of the parties which increased on both sides in 1926 and 1927 probably stemmed from the afore-mentioned changing dynamics in the Aegean Sea. I argue that while Turkey was becoming a more equal actor vis-à-vis the Dodecanese after 1926, the secrecy about the military activities on the islands was becoming increasingly important, especially for the comparative powers of the entities involved. Therefore, it can be suggested that those activities contributed to tension in the Aegean in these years.

Despite the expectations and the various sources of tensions in the area, the expected war did not take place. Van Evera explains this through the fact that “when conquest is hard, states are dissuaded from the aggression by the fear that victory will prove costly or unattainable.”³³⁸ Since when the victory is easy, aggression is more alluring between two or more states;³³⁹ Italy did not venture using the Dodecanese as a beginning point of war, because the Italian memoranda on Turkey in 1927 began to describe the colonization of Turkey as necessitating not a single operation, but a proper war that would cost billions stemming both from the fact that the Turks could fight with 400,000 men in the area and from the fact that the country did not have considerable railroads or roads in the region,

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Stephen Van Evera, “Offense, Defense, and Causes of War,” in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p.47.

³³⁹ Ibid.

which would make the operation difficult to succeed.³⁴⁰ Turkey was not weak militarily in the west after the resolution of the Mosul conflict, and Italy was no longer backed by other powers in 1927. Therefore, specifically with the second half of 1927, the island-mainland relations entered into a new phase in which legal issues began to dominate the scene.

Pending Problems on the Verge of the War:
The Economic and Legal Matters between Turkey and the Dodecanese

Being on the brink of a war in the Aegean Sea was a significant condition in itself for Turkey as it was for the Dodecanese and Italy, and for the countries interested in the Mediterranean balance of power. But the fortifications on the islands and the Turkish policy in response were not the only issues existing in the relationship between the islands and the mainland. Other problems also stood out in terms of the Turkish-Dodecanese contacts which had remained under the realm of Turkish diplomacy. Yet the warlike conditions in the Aegean Sea had overshadowed these, as examined.

In this regard, one of the most important subjects between Turkey and the Dodecanese had to do with commercial relations, which were full of tension after 1923, specifically due to the trade and fishing restrictions imposed upon the Dodecanesians within Turkish territory and the smuggling between the shores. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the economy of the Dodecanese Islands had depended on trade made with Anatolia since pre-modern times. Indeed, this

³⁴⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Anatolia*," (Anatolia), 1927.

feature of the Dodecanesian economy did not change in the twentieth century either. Apart from the economically developed islands of Rhodes and Kos, the lands of which were suitable for agriculture and animal husbandry, people of the islands lived on fishing, sponge fishing, and trade with mainland.³⁴¹ It should be underlined that although the trade with Anatolia was so important for the islands, only a small part of it was carried out through legal ways. For example, Simi and Kastellorizo were particularly famous for the smuggling activities.³⁴²

1923, the Turkish Republic was founded and the Dodecanese was legally accepted as outside of Turkish borders, became a turning point not only for the political relations in the Aegean, but also for the economic contacts. This turning point was both the result of the Turkish restrictive trade policies in the Aegean,³⁴³ and the prohibition of the fishing in Turkish national waters for foreigners.³⁴⁴

These measures of Turkey deteriorated the economic well-being of the islanders, who were used to practice fishing along the both sides of the sea. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that Rome, in several diplomatic contacts with Ankara over the Dodecanese after 1923, insisted on an economic accord between Turkey and the Aegean islands that would regulate the relationship between these two entities. However, as can be expected, economic relations always took a back-seat and were negatively affected by the threat of war.

³⁴¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Promemoria*,” (Memorandum), n.d.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Traffico con Dodecanneso e Misure Doganali Turca*,” (Trade with the Dodecanese and Turkish Customs Measures), 10 January 1924.

³⁴⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Arresto Pescatore Simiesi in Acque Turche*,” (The Arrest of the Simian fishermen in Turkish Waters), 20 August 1923.

Beginning in 1923, Turkey had restricted trade with the Dodecanese, and closed its borders completely to ships specifically coming from Kastellorizo, accusing them with smuggling.³⁴⁵ The governor of the Dodecanese insisted negotiating an agreement on the economic relations between these two entities,³⁴⁶ stating that despite the complaints of Ankara, Turkish boats were also involved in smuggling, especially with tobacco and salt.³⁴⁷ According to him, it was actually the Turkish boats that were active even in this closed regime.³⁴⁸

At this point, it should be stated that Turkey complained about the smuggling of the Dodecanesians throughout the period under discussion. Indeed, contraband was a major problem in the Aegean Sea, necessitating further research. But I argue in this case that the overlapping of the closure time of the Anatolian ports to Kastellorizo with the afore-mentioned question of the islets that Turkey and Italy reciprocally occupied just after the Lausanne Treaty was not a coincidence. Instead, it was one of the trump cards of Turkey in the islet question. The Italian governor of Rhodes had suggested even the transfer of the islets to Turkey in return for the opening of the Anatolian ports to Kastellorizo since trade was much more important for the islanders.³⁴⁹

The concerns of Rome, however, diverged from those of the governor since strategic concerns predominated. This was one of the first examples of Turkey

³⁴⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Misure contro Navi da Castelrosso*,” (Measures against the Ships from Kastellorizo), 28 October 1923.

³⁴⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Chiusura Costa Anatolica ai Castelrossini*,” (The Closure of Anatolia to Kastellorizo), 25 October 1923.

³⁴⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Chiusura Costa Anatolica ai Castelrossini*,” (The Closure of Anatolia to Kastellorizo), 13 October 1923.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

seeking to exploit economic relations with the Dodecanese in order to strengthen its political position. Although no serious negotiation process regarding either the islets or the commercial linkages took place during this time as a result of the tense diplomatic relations, Turkey would follow the same strategy when the islet question would be discussed after 1927. This shows that the economic relations and the problems in the Aegean cannot be understood without taking the political and military environment in the region into consideration.

But, this does not mean that Turkey merely tried to benefit from economic issues during the warlike condition. Smuggling and even piracy directed from the Dodecanese did exist. Regarding the latter, although the authorities of the islands stated that it was exceptional,³⁵⁰ the activity of pirates between the islands and the mainland became another source of tension in the region. Actually, piracy was not an issue that took place only between Turkey and the Dodecanese; the inhabitants of the other islands that belonged to Greece in the northern part of the region also practiced piracy. For example, in 1923, the Greek pirates of Samos sank a boat with a Turkish flag and captured its sailors, who were Muslim Dodecanesians.³⁵¹

The acts of piracy were not being done only in the sea. Sometimes, Greek bands from the Dodecanese were coming to the mainland and kidnapped people there. For instance, in one incident, Simian pirates kidnapped two gendarmes and then a rural guard in Muğla.³⁵² These incidents led to serious diplomatic tension between Turkey and Italy. However, even if piracy and banditry materialized from

³⁵⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Corsani Greci di Samos*,” (Greek Pirates of Samos), 12 June 1924.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Dodecanneso e Turchia*,” (Dodecanese and Turkey), 25 April 1927.

the Dodecanese, it was also a problem for the Dodecanese administration itself, owing to the fact that these groups, especially on Kalimnos and Scarpanto, also worked against the Italian rule on the islands.³⁵³ For this reason, the Dodecanese administration generally asked for cooperation with Turkey in terms of patrolling the Aegean Sea.³⁵⁴ Such cooperation did not take place; yet, the administrations could suppress these kinds of events in due course as they consolidated their power in the region until the end of the 1920s.

As Governor Lago stated, while piracy was exceptional, the smuggling was common.³⁵⁵ Even though he occasionally insisted that Turkish smuggling occurred more often especially while he was explaining the facts to the officials in Rome and Ankara,³⁵⁶ he also acknowledged that the Turkish complaints, the gravity of which were pointless to veil, had an indisputable basis.³⁵⁷ He also said that smuggling was an absolute necessity of life for the poor people of the islands.³⁵⁸ The Dodecanese administration indicated the strict rules that Turkey implemented in the coastal areas as the sole reason for smuggling, and argued that sole possible solution would be regular traffic between the shores.³⁵⁹

³⁵³ It is seen from the documents that these bands were preparing for uprising in the Dodecanese, ASMAE, Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, “*Segnalazione di Pirati a Calimno*,” (Indication of Pirates in Kalimnos), 30 August 1923.

³⁵⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Incursione di Bande Greche in Asia Minore*,” (Incursion of Greek Bands into Turkey), 18 October 1923.

³⁵⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, “*Corsani Greci di Samos*,” (Greek Pirates of Samos), 12 June 1924.

³⁵⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Accordo di Buon Vicinato tre le Isole e L’Anatolia*,” (Good Neighborhood Accords between the Islands and the Anatolia), 23 May 1927.

³⁵⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Dodecanneso e Turchia*,” (Dodecanese and Turkey), 13 March 1927.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Accordo di Buon Vicinato tre le Isole e L’Anatolia*,” (Good Neighborhood Accords between the Islands and the Anatolia), 23 May 1927.

At various times between 1923 and 1939, both the Dodecanese government and the Italian officials in Turkey insisted on a treaty to implement a more flexible trade regime between the Aegean Islands and Turkey. The latter refused such an initiative based on different excuses. For example, while in 1924, when Italy, Britain, and Greece were still discussing the future of Dodecanese as explained above, Turkey stated that an agreement was impossible before the parties settled the fate of the islands.³⁶⁰ Another time, Ankara said that a treaty between the islands and Turkey could not be viable because the Dodecanese did not have a right to stipulate such an international act since it did not have a legal existence separate from Italy.³⁶¹

Obviously, it was not expectable that such a treaty could be made between Turkey and the Dodecanese, owing to the danger that the islands represented in the minds of Ankara. In other words, it was no coincidence that these issues were negotiated between the officials only just after the Lausanne Treaty. Any serious contact regarding the economic relations did not take place during the warlike condition after 1924, similar to the islet question.

This quarrelsome condition in the Aegean made the economic sphere worse than it had been in the post Lausanne period, letting aside an agreement. For example, one of the most important rights that the Dodecanese administration desired was the mutual reciprocity of fishing/sponge fishing right, which was

³⁶⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, "*Turchia e Dodecaneso*," (Turkey and the Dodecanese), 6 April 1924.

³⁶¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Trattative per Pesca Dodecanneso e Costa Anatolia*," (Negotiations for the Fisheries of the Dodecanese and the Anatolian Coast), 13 March 1924.

banned to foreign nationals in Turkish national waters,³⁶² in order to eliminate poaching. Putting aside such an agreement in this tense political environment that military activities dominated, the Turkish response especially in terms of the local administrations were so harsh that the Turkish gendarmes stopped Dodecanesian fishing boats and arrested their crews,³⁶³ and sometimes opened fire to them.³⁶⁴

Apart from the harsh response of the Turkish authorities to smuggling and poaching during this period, according to Italian officials, another reason for this hostility was about the Turkish fear which regarded every single Dodecanesian boat as a source of espionage and surveillance.³⁶⁵ The Italians accepted the impossibility of expecting something positive in the economic relations as long as potentiality of war endured.

The economic contacts between the Dodecanese and Anatolia were not the sole complexity in this sub-period. On the contrary, confusion and obscurity also on matters like citizenship and property were significant for the people. In this respect, similar to the economic realm, the legal separation of the coasts in 1923 led to the issues both in Anatolia and the Dodecanese owing to the fact that these people were using both coasts. In terms of citizenship, who belonged to which country created one of the biggest confusions of the time, particularly for the islanders. For example, it was a complete challenge for the authorities to determine

³⁶² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Turchia e Dodecaneso*," (Turkey and the Dodecanese), 13 March 1927.

³⁶³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Arresto Pescatore Simiesi in Acque Turche*," (The Arrest of the Simian Fishermen in the Turkish Waters), 20 August 1923.

³⁶⁴ In one of these incidents, one fisherman had been killed a result of firing on the grounds that poaching with bomb. ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990 "*Uccisione di Marittimi Dodecanesini da Parte di Gendarmi Turchi*," (The Killing of the Dodecanesian Sailor by the Turkish Gendarmes), 14 December 1927.

³⁶⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Turchia ed Italia*," (Turkey and Italy), 16 April 1927.

the nationality of a Greek man who had been born on Rhodes, lived in Anatolia, but fought with the Greeks against the Turks in the Turkish-Greek war. Turkey held this man as a prisoner of war and in return both Greece and Italy wanted him to return back to his own country, either Greece or the Dodecanese.³⁶⁶

Turkey refused the Italian claim that he was a Dodecanesian, so under the protection of Italy, on the grounds that the Dodecanese had still been Ottoman land at that time being just under the Italian occupation.³⁶⁷ Likewise, Greece claimed that the man was a Greek of Anatolia, and thus, be sent to his motherland. The result of the case is not known from the archival material. However, it should be emphasized that the Dodecanese folders in the archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs are full of such cases.

Obviously, although the several articles of Lausanne Treaty deal with the citizenship issue in terms giving people a right to opt for a nationality in specific conditions, within a two year period after the ratification of the treaty,³⁶⁸ it seemed

³⁶⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Nicola Cursula*,” (Nicola Cursula), 15 June 1923.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ In this sense, specifically the Article 32 and 34 suits to the issue of the Dodecanese nationality.

“Article 32: Persons over eighteen years of age, habitually resident in territory detached from Turkey in accordance with the present Treaty, and differing in race from the majority of the population of such territory shall, within two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty, be entitled to opt for the nationality of one of the States in which the majority of the population is of the same race as the person exercising the right to opt, subject to the consent of that State.”

“Article 34: Subject to any agreements which it may be necessary to conclude between the Governments exercising authority in the countries detached from Turkey and the Governments of the countries where the persons concerned are resident, Turkish nationals of over eighteen years of age who are natives of a territory detached from Turkey under the present Treaty, and who on its coming into force are habitually resident abroad, may opt for the nationality of the territory of which they are natives, if they belong by race to the majority of the population of that territory, and subject to the consent of the Government exercising authority therein. This right of option must be exercised within two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty.”

that the clash between the Turkish and Italian authorities together with the Greek ones persisted over the people's nationality until the beginning of the opting period. This clash over the nationality issue did not come to an end after the Italian ratification of the Lausanne Treaty. Tension about the opting process increased between 1924 and 1926 during which both parties tried to make people to opt for their country. While the Italians needed the Turkish ethnicity in the islands in order to balance the Greek dominance,³⁶⁹ the documents do not address the main aim behind the Turkish effort to attract Muslims.³⁷⁰

The activities of the both sides to this end are worth discussion. For example, the Italian authorities had protested when Turkish authorities in Anatolia had changed the passports of the Dodecanesians who visited Turkey with the new Turkish passports on the grounds that this act was an offense to the Lausanne Treaty.³⁷¹ Likewise, the consular activities of Turkey in the Dodecanese were accused of using different methods to enforce the Muslims of the Dodecanese to take Turkish citizenship as a result of which nearly three thousand people on Rhodes opted for Turkish nationality.³⁷²

For the treaty see Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Lausanne Peace Treaty," http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (accessed June 22, 2013).

³⁶⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Protezione Musulmani Dodecanesini Oriundi Cretesi*," (The protection of the Dodecanese Muslims with Crete Origin), 27 July 1923.

³⁷⁰ However, the aim of Turkey to get the Muslims into the Turkish nationality could be evaluated either based on political reasons including the property matters, since both sides questioned the properties of their own citizens in the fronting coast at that time, or based on nationalistic views together with the demographic ones.

³⁷¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 988, "*Ritiro del Passaporto a Dodecanesini da Parte del Autorita Turche*," (Withdrawal of the Passports of the Dodecanesians by the Turkish Authorities), 9 May 1924.

³⁷² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, "*Pro-Memoria- Il Console Turchia*," (Memorandum- The Turkish Console), n.d., 1926.

While Turkey that took measures for the opting period, the Dodecanese authorities also made a great deal of effort to keep Muslims on the islands. In this respect, the decision of the governor Lago to confine a Turkish notable of Kos, whom Turkish consulate to make the Muslims to opt for Turkish nationality, to Simi until the end of the opting period³⁷³ was remarkable, but not surprising in these circumstances.

It could be argued that despite the existence of diplomatic tension, the warlike condition in the Aegean affected the nationality issue minimally due to the fact that it was subjected to a legal process within a fixed term. However, the fate of the properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia necessitated smooth diplomatic relations, which did not exist in this period. The complicated problem of the property issue had two aspects. On the one hand, a chaotic situation arose about the registries of the islands that were in Turkey from which they were requested by Italy.³⁷⁴ On the other hand, the status of the property owned by the Dodecanesians in Anatolia was ambiguous. Since the Dodecanese was not included in the population exchange, the fate of the property of the Greek Dodecanesians in Anatolia was not specified.

³⁷³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Opzione dei Dodecannesini Mussulmani per la Cittadinanza Turca*,” (Option for the Dodecanese Muslims for the Turkish Citizenship), 24 July 1926.

³⁷⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 987, “*Registri Turchi della Proprieta Fondiaria di Cos*,” (Turkish Registries from the *Vakıf* Property of Kos), 5 November 1923.

In terms of the registries, the Lausanne Treaty had anticipated the dispatch of the necessary records, either the original ones or in the form of copies.³⁷⁵ The Italian authorities had made their first request to Ankara in 1923, just after a conflict occurred because the administration had rented the land of a Muslim man, who lacked a title deed, to a Greek islander.³⁷⁶

The fear of the Dodecanese administration was Turkey's possible objection to sending the original registers.³⁷⁷ According to Lago, the delay in the dispatch of the registers was carrying the danger of the change in the documents because the Turkish authorities might attempt to alter the records in order to support the Muslim claims about the properties on the islands.³⁷⁸ Whatever the motive of the Turkish state delaying in sending the documents, the reality was that by the end of this period, the parties had not solved the problem, as being another frozen matter waiting for a smooth diplomatic contact.

In the realm of the possessions, the situation was not different but more acute in the sense that the Dodecanesians who wondered about the fate of their properties in Turkey, had submitted thousands of petitions.³⁷⁹ As stated above, the islanders were living in the both sides of the Aegean and they had houses and lands in Turkey. No concrete decision had been made in the Lausanne Treaty

³⁷⁵ See the Article 139 in Lausanne Treaty, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Lausanne Peace Treaty," http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-v-miscellaneous-provisions-1_prisoners-of-war.en.mfa (accessed April 12, 2014).

³⁷⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Registri Turchi della Proprieta Fondiaria di Cos*," (Turkish Registries from the Vakıf Property of Kos), 8 October 1923.

³⁷⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Registri Turchi della Proprieta Fondiaria di Cos*," (Turkish Registries from the Vakıf Property of Kos), 21 October 1923.

³⁷⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, "*Registri della Proprieta Fondiaria delle Isole di Rodi e Coo*," (Registries of the Vakıf Property in Rhodes and Kos), 15 April 1926.

³⁷⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, "*Proprieta dei Dodecanesini in Anatolia*," (Property of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia), 8 October 1923.

about them, and the question of citizenship had further complicated the situation after 1923 as well.³⁸⁰ According to the Italians, a possible solution to this problem, either in terms of restitution or in terms of the restoration, was the foundation of a committee similar to the Turkish-Greek joint commission.³⁸¹ But if the sensitive nature of the issue for Turkey at that time and the uneasy relationship with the islands throughout the period are kept in mind, it was not surprising that the Turks refused to take any steps for such an initiative.

Therefore, the strategy of the Italians about the property issue evolved from the desire for a commission to appealing to the Turkish authorities based on single cases rather than the maximum questions in due course.³⁸² However, the Dodecanese administration used the expropriation of the *vakıf* (foundation) property on the islands as a diplomatic trump card for the resolution of these separate property cases.³⁸³ Even so, the two most important cases for which the application to the Turkish institutions was made in 1924 could not be solved by the end of 1927 despite the tactics.

Obviously, all of these problems that resulted from the Lausanne settlement required smooth diplomatic relations. But this period reflected the characteristics of military tension instead of the initiatives of diplomatic resolutions. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the majority of the abovementioned questions would be handled in the subsequent period during

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, “*Proprieta dei Dodecanesini in Anatolia*,” (Property of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia), 26 January 1927.

³⁸³ ASMAE, Pacco 989 Dodecanneso, “*Espropriazioni a Rodi*,” (Expropriation in Rhodes), 23 July 1926.

which the legal and diplomatic problems would be dealt with around the question of the Kastellorizo islets, based on the changing dynamics in the Aegean the condition of which developed from being on the verge of war, to relative détente. Yet, beyond the absence of will to solve the problems in this period, all of these issues like property or commercial relations were good examples of how the separation of the islands from its closest mainland had direct influences on the people living in this geography.

This chapter argued that the problematic nature of the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese began just after the conclusion of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. One of the problems involved sovereignty. While Turkey and Italy claimed the islets around Kastellorizo Island, Italy, Britain, and Greece were still discussing the sovereignty of the Dodecanese amongst themselves. None of the issues yielded a result that would change the status quo. The islet problem would wait for a negotiation process that would come in the end of the 1920s. Likewise, Italy kept the Dodecanese, resisting the Greek claims that were supported by Britain.

1923 saw problems between the islands and mainland, specifically stemming from the borders drawn between two entities. The frontiers affected economic activities, like fishing and sponge fishing, and the properties of the individuals, complicating the lives of the people who were used to live on both the mainland and the islands. Yet, these problems also could not be solved, or even

barely discussed in this period, owing to the deficiency of appropriate diplomatic contacts between the responsible parties.

The absence of smooth diplomatic relationship puts the most important aspect of the problematic relationship between the parties forward: military fortifications on the islands based on an aggressive discourse. Beginning with 1924, the perception of Turkey about the islands reflected the expectation of an assault from the Dodecanese. Therefore, while the tension in the Aegean Sea increased, the security understanding of Turkey was adjusted accordingly. Every step of the Italians was followed with concern, and the Turkish understanding of “islands” was equated with danger. This chapter also designated that the danger that Turkey perceived from the islands was a multifaceted issue, since the newborn country was a relatively isolated one with various foreign policy problems, some of which were somewhat combined.

Mosul became such a parameter within the place of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy. The collaboration between Italy and Britain, on the one hand, Italy and Greece, on the other hand, turned the islands into a much more serious threat for Turkey, which was intimidated both from the east and from the west in this period.

Although this complicated situation came to an end with the resolution of the Mosul question in 1926, the tension in the Aegean continued, especially through the military undertakings and increased intelligence activities. This chapter, while showing that the dynamics in the Aegean Sea began to change during 1927, tried to exhibit in general how Turkey experienced a period of serious problems over those little islands.

CHAPTER 4

RELATIVE DÉTENTE: THE KASTELLORIZO (MEIS) ISLETS AND ECONOMIC ISSUES, 1927-1934

1927 symbolizes a change regarding the Dodecanese dynamic in Turkish foreign and security policy. This alteration, which would continue until 1934, with its ups and downs, led to a change of agenda in the Dodecanesian affairs due to the internal and external conditions of the period. This chapter, while showing a “relative détente” in the relationship of the two shores in terms of military undertakings parallel with the amelioration of Turkish-Italian relations, it will also shed light upon particular aspects, like the delimitation of maritime boundaries, territorial waters, the sovereignty of the islets and rocks, commercial relations as the issues inherited from the previous sub-period.

It should be emphasized that some of these issues have survived today, like the sovereignty of the islets or the territorial waters, within the realm of Turkish-Greek relations regarding the Archipelago, showing that these problems date back to the foundation of the Republic, rather than post-1950s. Actually, all these issues that have been discussed from 1923 until recent day also designate one of the arguments of this study: the problematic nature of the relationship between the islands and the Turkish mainland. This chapter is also important in this regard, since it shows that the Archipelago was not without problems in those issues even in the détente conditions.

The “détente” in question here represents the coming of diplomacy to the forefront, especially about the sovereignty of the islets dependent on Kastellorizo as well as about the economic issues between the Turkish mainland and the Dodecanese Islands. In other words, the warlike condition in the Aegean Sea based on the mutual fortifications of the parties, as the previous chapter discussed, took a backseat in the region. The historical documents within the folders of the Dodecanese in the archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly reflect this fact in a way that during period of this chapter, the dossiers of materials concerning Kastellorizo and the economic problems between the shores outbalance the ones concerning military issues. However, this does not mean a sincere fellowship in the Aegean either. That is why I prefer to call the period one of “relative” détente.

First of all, the documents show that the transportation of the guns and ammunitions onto Leros and the southern part of Turkey continued even in this period, yet to a smaller extent.³⁸⁴ Second, despite the fact that this period has been regarded as one of rapprochement, especially in terms of Turkish-Italian relations, the issues in the Aegean sometimes led to tension especially regarding the islets. The period concerning the Dodecanese was far from the military dynamics of the previous one, although the mutual distrust of the parties for each other and the complexities of the above-mentioned problems in the Aegean did not result in a smooth process of friendship. Nevertheless, this period of relative détente is unique in a way that the diplomatic aspect of the Dodecanese Islands was much more important than the military aspect if the years until the end of the Second World War are kept in mind.

³⁸⁴ For example, intelligence reports stated that even in 1930, Italy was transferring arms to Leros, ASMAE, Pacco 994, “*Pretese Fortificazioni nell’isola di Leros*,” (Claims of Fortifications in Leros), 20 January 1930.

In Flux: Changing Conditions, Changing Diplomatic Alliances

In the last years of the 1920s, the scene in Turkey was much different than it had been in the first half of the decade. In the previous chapter, it was suggested that Turkey just after 1923 was in a vulnerable position with external and internal problems. However, after 1925 and 1926, the position of the new Republic strengthened in both two areas. Externally, a significant problem of Turkish foreign policy had been terminated. The final solution of the Mosul question in 1926 became a turning point regarding the relations of Turkey with the Western powers,³⁸⁵ in the way of elimination of Ankara's isolation in the international arena. Turkey's international position progressed further with its membership to the League of Nations in 1932. Especially after the closure of the Mosul folder, Turkey made other initiatives to solve its diplomatic problems with various countries in this period, as the ones with Greece. In short, Turkey was transformed from a fragile new-born into an equal member of international society within the period of this chapter.

Internally, the suppression of the Sheik Said rebellion in the Eastern cities of Turkey and the dissolution of the opposition, the Progressive Republican Party, in 1925 solidified the position of the ruling Republican People's Party (RPP) within two years. According to Feroz Ahmad, with the cessation of all the opposition in the country, Turkey acquired political stability for the first time since 1908.³⁸⁶ The internal stability and the external consolidation began to be reflected in Turkish diplomacy in the late 1920s. Thus, the stance of Turkey towards the Dodecanese as well as towards Italy as

³⁸⁵ Kürkçüoğlu, p.321.

³⁸⁶ Ahmad, pp.57-58.

the sovereign power of the islands changed. The only dynamic behind this transformation was not the external and internal recovery of the Republic, though. The Italian attitude towards Turkey changed from aggression to rapprochement, both due to the above-mentioned changes in the Turkish position, and to the specific reasons dependent on the Italian foreign policy.

First of all, as it was stated in the previous chapter, although the military activities in the Dodecanese continued throughout 1926, Italy had lost the support of the British regarding Turkey especially after the resolution of the Mosul question. John Gooch's work, which shows that although the Italian General Staff had drawn up an military operation plan against Anatolia at the end of 1926 with the acceptance of the higher echelons, Chamberlain had vetoed any such attack, is valuable in this regard.³⁸⁷ Accordingly, the Italian attitude towards Turkey began to change beginning with 1927 because Turkey was no longer a sitting target in terms of its capacity to fight with its all power in the Aegean.³⁸⁸ In other words, the colonization of Anatolia would necessitate a full out war, rather than a simple landing.³⁸⁹ However, the change in the military conditions of Turkey was not the only reason for the Turkish-Italian détente.

The mutual enmities and rivalries on the European scene were also decisive in this process. France, as the traditional rival of Italy in the Mediterranean, had constituted a series of treaties with the Balkan and Eastern European countries beginning with the first years of the 1920s. The last of these treaties was signed in 1927 with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes which irritated Italy owing both to the conclusive ascendancy of France in the region and to the formation of an anti-revisionist alliance

³⁸⁷ Gooch, p.65.

³⁸⁸ ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, "*Anatolia*," (Anatolia), 1927.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

just near its territory; in the Adriatic Sea on which it had ambitions.³⁹⁰ In this context, Italy began to see Turkey as an actor in the Balkan Peninsula that it could use as a balancing element specifically against France and its ally, Yugoslavia.³⁹¹

The program of Mussolini depended on the constitution of a revisionist Aegean block with Greece and Turkey,³⁹² to balance the pro-status quo settlement of France in the Balkans. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that Mussolini encouraged Turkish-Greek rapprochement throughout the process of diplomatic negotiations between the parties, especially based on the problems of population-exchange. Although as Stavrianos writes the “Greco-Turkish tie, once achieved, proved to be the one of the strongest bulwarks of the status-quo in the Balkans,”³⁹³ it became one of the most significant aims of the Italian foreign policy for a while, thus being the cornerstones of the above-mentioned détente period.

It is important to emphasize that if the consolidation of the Turkish regime and the diplomatic competition within the Balkans paved way for a détente and a negotiation process for the Aegean issues between Turkey and Italy, Dino Grandi’s takeover of Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1929 strengthened the situation further. Although the expansionism idea in Italian foreign policy survived throughout the Fascist period, Grandi, who would be in office until 1932, turned the mode of Italian foreign policy from aggression as in the previous period into a peaceful manner, which Burgwyn calls a “peace offensive.”³⁹⁴ That means, the new foreign minister would try to achieve the aims

³⁹⁰ L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst, 2000), p.734.

³⁹¹ Barlas, “Friends or Foes?” p.238

³⁹² Ibid., p.239.

³⁹³ Stavrianos, p.736.

³⁹⁴ Burgwyn, p.57.

of Fascist Italy through diplomacy and guile since the military capability of the country did not seem very promising at the time.³⁹⁵

The experts indicated the weakness of military and explained the impossibility of conducting a war “on its own” in the immediate future, due to the lack of industrial capacity and the imports in excess.³⁹⁶ It should be kept in mind that the year Grandi took office was 1929 when the world was plunged into the Great Depression. In addition to the organizational difficulties in the Italian military at that time, such as the serious tension between various services, the preparedness for a war was also insufficient in terms of the financial drawback.³⁹⁷

When all these factors regarding the changing status of Turkey together with the specific conditions of Italian military and foreign policy are calculated together, how the Turkish-Italian relations transformed into a relative *détente* from being on the verge of war could be understood better. In this period of the relationship, important developments that both Turkey and Italy seemed to benefit from the friendly relations occurred. For example, the parties signed a Treaty of Neutrality and Reconciliation in May 1928, by which they mutually promised not to have any designs on each other, and Italy backed Turkey in its diplomatic relations and ventures like in the negotiation process between Ankara and Athens, or in the membership to the League of Nations in 1932.³⁹⁸

One of the most outstanding developments of this period in terms of the bilateral friendly-relations was that the two countries made arms trade through which Turkey

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Gooch, p.137.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., pp.137-141. Even in 1934, the France’s army budget was two times higher than one of Italy; *ibid.*, p.208.

³⁹⁸ For more information about the period, see Barlas, “Friends or Foes?” pp. 237-243.

improved its navy with submarines built in the Italian shipyards.³⁹⁹ This economic relationship between the parties allowed the ardent enemies of the previous period to exchange arms and military equipment as the result of their warmer relationship in this time frame although they were “friends” of the conditions.

As this period opened a new path for the Turkish-Italian diplomatic and economic interaction, it also changed the main theme of the Dodecanese dynamic for Turkey. The end of the warlike situation in the Dodecanese did not render those islands irrelevant. On the contrary, as stated above, a new era was opened for diplomatic negotiations concerning the problems between the islands and the Turkish mainland while the parties continued to follow the military actions of each other on the facing coasts. The islands, thus, persisted to be problematic for both parties, though the probability of a war was remote. However, despite the problematic nature as well as the importance of the issue concerning the Dodecanese, like the sovereignty of the islets or the economic relations, and despite the prepotency of the matter from 1927 until 1933-1934, the Turkish historiography does not handle the issue beyond the conclusion of the Turkish-Italian Convention for the Delimitation of the Territorial Waters between the Coast of Anatolia and the Island of Kastellorizo in 1932.⁴⁰⁰ This chapter, in which the legal and diplomatic issues over the Dodecanese prevailed, will show how the Dodecanese dynamic became a complex diplomatic issue for Turkey, and how this part

³⁹⁹ For more information about the arms trade between Turkey and Italy in this period, see Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç “To Build a Navy with the Help of Adversary: Italian–Turkish Naval Arms Trade, 1929–32,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no.4 (October 2002), pp.143–168.

⁴⁰⁰ Both Barlas in her article “Friends or Foes?” and other Turkish foreign policy excerpts that deal with the Turkish-Italian relations like the edited volumes of *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası* by Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi and *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* edited by Baskın Oran do not give any information about the process.

of the relationship may not have absolutely reflected the dynamics of the above-mentioned diplomatic friendship.

“Good Neighbors” or Not? The Return of the Islets Question into the Scene

The problem about the islets dependent on the Kastellorizo Island emerged just after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty. In the previous chapter, it was introduced that the fifteenth article of the Lausanne Treaty led to the emergence of an “islet dispute” based on the vague character of the article in question:

Turkey renounces in favor of Italy all rights and title over the following islands: Stampalia (Astrapalia), Rhodes (Rhodos) Calki (Kharki), Scarpanto, Casos (Casso), Piscopis (Tilos), Misiros (Nisyros), Calimnos (Kalymnos), Leros, Patmos, Lipsos (Lipso), Simi (Symi), and Cos (Kos), which are now occupied by Italy, and the islets dependent thereon, and also over the island of Castellorizzo.⁴⁰¹

Since with this clause the islets dependent on the Dodecanese group were frankly granted to Italy while the sovereignty of Kastellorizo was transferred without mention about its surrounding islets, the Turkish officials had interpreted the clause as if the islets had been remained under the Turkish control. On the basis of the territorial claims of the parties, 1923 and 1924 saw flag clashes during which both the Turkish and Italian

⁴⁰¹ Article 15, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Lausanne Peace Treaty,” http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (accessed May 1, 2014).

authorities hoisted their flags on the islets, which had led to a diplomatic and nearly military clash around Kastellorizo.⁴⁰²

Although the flag tension came to an end in 1924, the sovereignty problem about the islets continued. Actually, the problem had been frozen in 1924 without a solution due to the reciprocal position of the parties which has been defined as on the verge of war. In other words, the attention of the parties moved from the islets to the islands in such a way that while Italians had fortified the Dodecanese in order for a possible landing on Anatolia, Turkey was prepared for a war coming from these islands. The islets had to wait for 1927 in order to re-enter onto the agenda.

The above-mentioned détente in the relations had implications on the islets problem. Beginning from 1927 until 1934, the islets in the Aegean Sea were discussed and negotiated on different platforms together with various issues. 1927 had key importance in this regard because it reflected a period in which the parties tried to settle a method to reach a peaceful conclusion.

Actually, the re-appearance of the issue dated back to June 1927, when a group of Turkish soldiers occupied Ipsili (*Strongili*) on the grounds that the smugglers of Kastellorizo were using the islet as a jumping point to Anatolia.⁴⁰³ Nearly at the same

⁴⁰² For more information about this flag raise, see Chapter 3.

⁴⁰³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Occupazione di Ipsili*,” (Occupation of Ipsili), nd.

time, a rumor about the occupation of the San Giorgio (Rho) also came up, but the

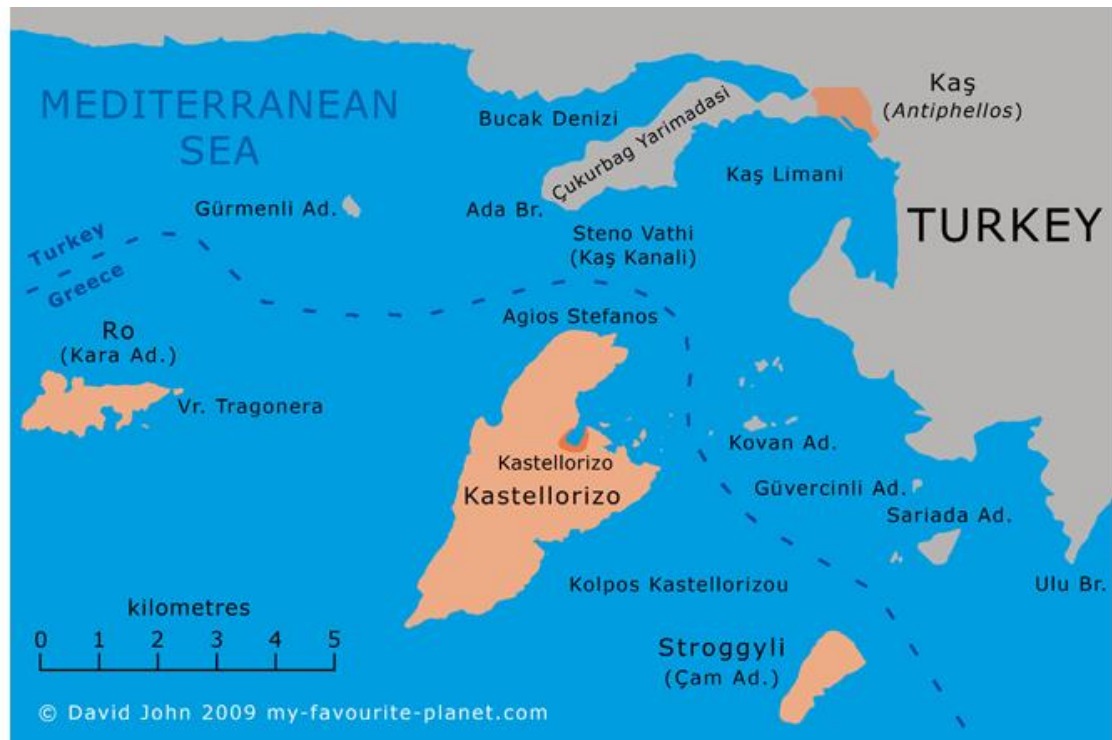


Figure 4. Map of Kastellorizo Islets, Courtesy of *My Favourite Planet*, <http://www.my-favourite-planet.de/english/europe/greece/dodecanese/kastellorizo/kastellorizo-09.html#map1-detailed-map-of-kastellorizo> (accessed March 24, 2015).

Italian authorities denied this hearsay later on.⁴⁰⁴ Additionally, the intelligence about the accumulation of Turkish troops specifically in the Kaş region just facing the Kastellorizo Island led to tension with the Italian authorities.⁴⁰⁵

According to the governor of the Dodecanese, Lago, the reason behind this action was the Turkish desire to move the islet question to the forefront again.⁴⁰⁶ He was accurate in his argument in the sense that just after the diplomatic contacts between the

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Attività Turca presso Castelrosso*,” (*Turkish Activity nearby Castelrosso*), 21 June 1927.

parties, Turkish soldiers had been withdrawn from the islet in question,⁴⁰⁷ and thereafter a further acceleration of diplomatic correspondence about the future of the islets occurred. The result of this correspondence was the mutual acceptance of the parties to constitute a commission in order to negotiate and resolve the issue of the islets that were naturally involved in the territorial waters between the Anatolian coasts and the Kastellorizo Island.⁴⁰⁸

In this acceptance, both two countries emphasized that the issue had to be solved within the framework of the sixth and fifteenth articles of the Lausanne Treaty.⁴⁰⁹ In this regard, the parties would constitute two delegates and if those two delegates had different opinions about the problem, the case would be sent to arbitration.⁴¹⁰ However, despite the fact that Turkey and Italy seemed to agree on solving the issue within the framework of the Lausanne Treaty, at least in the above-mentioned compromise, several documents suggest that Italy should have avoided from some premises of the peace treaty because the technical implementation of the articles at issue would clearly support the arguments of Turkey.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Isolotti intorno Castelrosso*,” (Islets around Kastellorizo), 30 June 1927.

⁴⁰⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Incidente Ipsili*,” (Ipsili Incident), 7 July 1927.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. The sixth article of the Lausanne Treaty is: “In so far as concerns frontiers defined by a waterway as distinct from its banks, the phrases “course” or “channel” used in the descriptions of the present Treaty signify, as regards non-navigable rivers, the median line of the waterway or of its principal branch, and, as regards navigable rivers, the median line of the principal channel of navigation. It will rest with the Boundary Commission to specify whether the frontier line shall follow any changes of the course or channel which may take place, or whether it shall be definitely fixed by the position of the course or channel at the time when the present Treaty comes into force. In the absence of provisions to the contrary, in the present Treaty, islands and islets lying within three miles of the coast are included within the frontier of the coastal State.”

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Questione Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (The Question about the Islets of Castelrosso), 27 July 1927 and “*Delimitazione Acque Territoriali Castelrosso*,” (Delimitation of Territorial Waters of Kastellorizo), 30 July 1927.

Despite the diplomatic stance of the parties, the process was not without tension. The incidents around the islets which could be regarded as ordinary for all the islands especially in the warlike period did not come to an end. As was explained in the previous chapter, the islanders were prohibited from fishing in the Turkish territorial waters due to their foreign citizenship and occasional incidents took place between the Turkish gendarmes and Dodecanesian fishermen since the maritime boundaries in the Aegean were not decisive and the Turkish authorities usually regarded the fishermen either as smugglers or as possible spies.⁴¹²

In 1927, the main concerns of Turkey at least in terms of smuggling or poaching activities did not change. For example, just after the above-mentioned settlement between the parties for the constitution of the delegations for a resolution, a violent incident between Turkish gendarme and fishing boat from Kastellorizo occurred. As a result of the intrusion, warning, and gunshots, respectively, one fisherman lost his eye, since he was making fishing activity in the Turkish territorial waters.⁴¹³ According to governor Lago, Turkey was trying to constitute its sovereignty on the islets with new proofs because its surveillance boats were performing non-stop policing activities in the waters near the islets and were not hesitating to act against the boats from Kastellorizo.⁴¹⁴ The Italian answer to the actions of Turkey near the islets was to send Italian boats to the mentioned area in order to nullify the Turkish claims.⁴¹⁵ In short, the

⁴¹² For more information see Chapter 3.

⁴¹³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Nuovo Incidente Castelrosso*,” (New Kastellorizo Incident), 3 August 1927.

⁴¹⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 15 November 1927.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

problem was reopened to discussion in 1927, but the tension did not decrease on the shores.

The parties formulated the general framework of their arguments during 1927. It should be emphasized that the ideas of the parties were modified from time to time parallel to the necessities of a diplomatic process. However, some specific lines of the sides did not change. Turkey regarded the islets, as in the case of the islands in the Aegean Sea, from a strategic point of view. A piece of news from *Cumhuriyet* summarizes this point of view since it states that Kastellorizo was an island without agricultural, industrial, or commercial quality, but with a strategic value which could be used in the case of a landing on Anatolia.⁴¹⁶

Throughout the period of this dissertation, the Turkish understanding of the islands always depended on strategic considerations based on mistrust. Even if the islets were very small in size, Turkey established its policy on not giving them to another power which could use its harbor facilities against Anatolia. No doubt, keeping the islets had also a psychological dimension that the new Republic did not have any tolerance for losing even a tiny rock in the region. With the aim of keeping the islets within Turkish sovereignty, the stance of Ankara was closer to a technical interpretation of Lausanne's relevant articles because they were clearly advantageous to the Turks. In the colloquia between Turkish and Italian officials, the Turkish side did not hesitate to apply for arbitration in the Hague Tribunal for a final resolution, because of the above-mentioned legal superiority.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "Press about Meis," 27 December 1927.

⁴¹⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Islets of Castelrosso), 20 December 1927.

On the contrary, according to the Italian authorities, the solution had to be reached through bilateral friendship and compromise rather the arbitration process, which would be long and costly for the parties.⁴¹⁸ This desire of Rome was closely related to the weakness of the Italian position in a probable technical process. However, that was not the sole reason for a quest of bilateral negotiations. The Italian aim was to negotiate the islets issue together with the economic relations between the Turkish coasts and the Dodecanese Islands. If the real issue for Turkish and Italian officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of two countries was to determine a maritime frontier between Kastellorizo and Anatolia, the same for the officials of the Dodecanese was to constitute a “good neighborhood” treaty between the Anatolian coasts and the Dodecanese.

Indeed, it could be seen from the official correspondences that governor Lago was much more interested in the economic problems of the Dodecanesians pertaining to the Anatolian shores than the maritime frontier issues. Since he frequently stated that Turkey could live well without the islands, but the islands could not live commercially without Turkey based on the experience of his period,⁴¹⁹ his advice to Rome was to formulate an agreement that would regulate the economic issues between Anatolian coast and the Dodecanese. This agreement which the Italians preferred to call as “good neighborhood” treaty, would have included the mutual free exercise of fishing/sponge fishing on the coasts or territorial waters of the Dodecanese and the Anatolia together with the a commercial and maritime accords based on a liberal regime of circulation and

⁴¹⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo), 18 November 1927 and “*Questione Confini Italo-Turchi*,” (The Question of Borders between Turkey and Italy), 13 November 1927.

⁴¹⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Attivita e Ostilita Dodecanneso- Turchia*,” (Activity and Hostility between Turkey and Dodecanese), 27 February 1927.

exchange of strictly local products.⁴²⁰ According to Lago, without such a commercial accord, the simple delimitation of the maritime borders would be unnecessary for the Dodecanesians.⁴²¹

Despite the necessity of such an agreement, Lago seemed pessimistic about the Turkish attitude. He stated that the previous experiences with the Turkish authorities had led him to doubt strongly from the disposition of the Turkish government.⁴²² Therefore, according to his ideas, the Italian government had to get maximum but explicit support from the Turks about the points with which the relations of good neighborliness would be concretized.⁴²³ That is to say, before turning the islets into an item to be negotiated for a commercial treaty, Rome should have been careful about the real intent of the Turkish officials. Actually, a divergence of opinions between the governor and the bureaucrats of the foreign ministry seems to have existed because while Lago talked about his pessimism about the general Turkish behavior, officials in Rome underlined the necessity of the termination of smuggling activities exercised by the islanders in order to reach a positive conclusion with the Turks. The governor said that the Turks were practicing smuggling as well, to a maximum scope.⁴²⁴ Therefore, being able to exercise regular traffic was a necessary condition for the efficient repression of smuggling, as Lago reported.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Turchia e Dodecanneso*," (Turkey and Dodecanese), 13 March 1927.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Commissione Delimitazione Confini Isolotti Castellosso*," (Delimitation Commission about the Borders of Islets of Castellorizo), 29 October 1927.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Accordo di Buon Vicinato tra le Isole e l'Anatolia*," (Good Neighborhood Accord between the islands and the Anatolia), 23 May 1927.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

Lago's pessimist views regarding good neighborliness between the coasts were not impertinent. On the one hand, despite the above-mentioned bilateral détente in the relations, the incidents that resulted from the suspicion of smuggling and poaching endured. For example, during the days in which the desired agreement was being discussed, the Turkish officials shot the Simian fishermen who were fishing with dynamite in Turkish territorial waters.⁴²⁶ Those kinds of incidents not only around the Kastellorizo Island but also throughout the Dodecanese were repeated both in the negotiation period discussed in this chapter and later, leading to diplomatic tension between the countries. On the other hand, despite all the efforts of the Italian bureaucrats to attach the maritime frontier issue with the commercial relations, Turkish officials showed an uncompromising attitude to avoid the connection of these two issues with each other,⁴²⁷ since Ankara did not intend to make economic agreement.

It may be suggested that the Turkish attitude in this respect was much more diplomatic in the first phases in order not to alienate the counter-party, although the actual position of Ankara was always inclined to define a clear boundary in the Aegean single-handedly, rather than together with the constitution of a liberal trade regime with the other side of the coast. Ankara's attitude reflected a flexible and particularly informal position that depended on the mode of the mutual relations between the parties, instead of behaving on the basis of a concrete legal document. For example, in this period of détente, Turkey unilaterally gave coastal rights to the Dodecanesian ships

⁴²⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Uccisione di Marittimi Dodecannesini da Parte di Gendarmi Turchi*," (The Killing of the Dodecanesian Sailors by the Turkish Gendarms), 14 December 1927.

⁴²⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, "*Questione Confini Italo-Turchi*," (Question of the Borders between Turkey and Italy), 13 November 1927.

under a specific tonnage and emphasized this as the fair result of good relations.⁴²⁸

However, despite the dilatory approach of Turkey in terms of maritime trade, the desire of the Italian side regarding the permissions for the fisherman in the Turkish territorial waters was rejected even in the beginning of the process. About fishing permits, the Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) stated in colloquia that Turkish waters belonged only to the Turkish nationals.⁴²⁹

While Turkey and Italy were drawing the afore-mentioned borders of their positions throughout the 1927, it became evident by the end of the year that bilateral deliberations would not solve the problem in reality, and the case would be sent to the arbitration proceedings in the Hague Tribunal. In December 1927, Mussolini, who never wanted an international process for the issue owing to the weakness of the Italian thesis in case of a much more technical investigation, stated that Rome had displayed its good will to Ankara by agreeing to resolve the issue in a legal process in one of his letters.⁴³⁰ But, the Hague decision did not signal the end of the diplomatic process between the parties. On the contrary, all the processes would be carried out at the same time with each other.

The Hague vs. Diplomacy: The Clash of Ideas

⁴²⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Dodecanneso e Turchia*,” (Dodecanese and Turkey), 25 April 1927.

⁴²⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 18 November 1927.

⁴³⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 20 December 1927.

After the necessity for arbitration became understood, the preparation of the parties for The Hague began. These preparations were not just made up of the official defenses of both sides. The parties also needed to solve technical details in order to apply for arbitration, and in order to experience a healthy and successful legal proceeding. For example, as a minor but important detail, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered a comprehensive map of the region that would be worth of using in the official processes from the Institute of Hydrography within the framework of the Italian Marine Ministry.⁴³¹

At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that the matter of mapping specifically regarding the Aegean Archipelago was important both because of the lack of those kinds of detailed cartographical works and because of the tough character of the region consisting of little rocks and islets. Therefore, in the interwar years, Italians needed to conduct hydrographical studies in every time they dealt with the Aegean Islands and islets either with Turks or with Greeks.

Apart from this technical issue, the application to the arbitration also necessitated a preparation of a compromise that would constitute the main determinants of the process. In this sense, it is seen that Turkey, as the party that preferred to send the case to the arbitration pressed for the compromise for which Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) requested in the occasion to speed up the possible preparations for the agreement and to sign it as soon as possible.⁴³²

⁴³¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 23 Aralık 1927.

⁴³² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso, Tribunale dell’Aja*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo, Tribunal of Hague), 20 January 1928.

The Treaty signed between Turkey and Italy in May 1928 should also be seen from the perspective of the Kastellorizo issue because in addition to the neutrality clauses of the treaty through which Rome and Ankara promised not to participate in any combination against each other, they also undertook to accept the arbitration and judiciary regulation that the Court of Justice in the Hague would lead.⁴³³ The additional protocol to this treaty determined the basic rules and regulations about ways to send a conflict to the international court.⁴³⁴ The ratification of this treaty by the parties and the final decision to send the case to the court would take some time.

In the meantime, the parties started to arrange their defenses based on the advantages and disadvantages of their positions. While Turkey had the advantage stemming from the fifteenth article of the Lausanne Treaty, Italy had to constitute counterarguments that would challenge the Turkish position. It was seen that the Italian officials were in close cooperation with the governor of the Dodecanese who suggested grounding the Italian defense on three respects.

First of these arguments was closely related to geographic and navigational considerations. According to this argument, the two most important islets, namely Ipsili and San Giorgio, constituted an indivisible geographic unity.⁴³⁵ They were inseparable because it was not possible to draw a hydrographical map of Kastellorizo without these islets, and these two islets were the means of approaching the port of the main island.⁴³⁶ That is to say, in order to enter into or leave the port of Kastellorizo, it was obligatory to

⁴³³ İsmail Soysal, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Anlaşmaları: Tarihçeleri ve Açıklamaları ile Birlikte*, vol.1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), pp.335-336.

⁴³⁴ To see the full text of the Protocol, see Ibid., pp.336-339.

⁴³⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "*Arbitrato circa gli Isolotti dipendenti da Castelrosso*," (Arbitration about the Islets dependent on Kastellorizo), 24 December 1927.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

travel along the canals between Kastellorizo and Ipsili or Kastellorizo and San Giorgio on the basis of the conditions of weather and wind, unlike the facing coast.⁴³⁷ Since Kastellorizo was an important stop in the eastern Mediterranean maritime transport, the islets were a navigational necessity for the island.

The second argument of Italy was specifically social and economic. Since the islanders used the islets to graze their animals, to make agriculture and fishing, and to produce lime; the islets were undoubtedly economic and social parts of Kastellorizo.⁴³⁸ This situation had not changed since the nineteenth century and even the churches in the islets had been tied administratively to the main island.⁴³⁹ However, despite the aforementioned geographic, economic, social, and administrative ties, even Lago was in the need of creating a counter-argument based on the fifteenth article of the Lausanne Treaty.

He stated that although his third argument, which was juridical, could be regarded as weak, it should have been considered seriously for the Italian defense.⁴⁴⁰ According to this juridical understanding, the fifteenth article of the peace treaty should have been analyzed not in a technical sense but according to its spirit because Turkey had a simplistic approach while suggesting that since the clause at issue mentioned the islets of the Dodecanese group as opposed to the ones of Kastellorizo, they belonged to Turkey.⁴⁴¹

Lago argued that the reason behind this situation was the separate political situations of the Dodecanese and the Kastellorizo Island during the time that Sevres

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Treaty had been written.⁴⁴² Since France occupied the latter until 1921, and since the Lausanne's fifteenth article was a kind of reproduction of the Sevres Treaty, different paragraphs for those island groups had been constituted.⁴⁴³ That means, the spirit of the article was actually based on the inseparability of the islets from their dependent islands.

Although Lago insisted on the spirit of the article for the future defense of Rome, the other correspondences display the fact that during the Lausanne Conference, Italy had tried to ask specifically for the islets of Kastellorizo and the British had rejected this demand.⁴⁴⁴ That is to say, the article was not a simple replica written unconsciously from the one of Sevres Treaty. Still, this "spirit of the article" argument could constitute an important means of evidence in the court, according to the governor.

These three arguments by Lago were not the final framework of Italian defense and diplomacy. Since the diplomatic procedures continued at the same time, the Italian officials modified their position according to the development of contacts with Turkey and necessities of the give and take character of diplomacy. Obviously, both parties used this feature of diplomacy due to the fact that the problematic issues around the islets were plenty. For example, in January 1928, during which the decision of arbitration became obvious, Turkish Prime Minister İsmet (İnönü) had sent his gratitude to Mussolini for his judgment specifically stating that Turkish government would manifest its good will and attention to the projects of the Italian government in terms of the commercial relations between the coast and the islands.⁴⁴⁵ Obviously this expression

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Islets of Kastellorizo), 11 June 1928.

⁴⁴⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso, Tribunale dell'Aja*," (Islets of Kastellorizo, Tribunal of Hague), 20 January 1928.

was the Turkish strategy both to solemnize and to accelerate the arbitration process by giving the impression of flexibility in the matters that Italy especially paid attention.

The only issue that Italy was interested in terms of the Dodecanese was not economic relations. One more issue that Italy connected the negotiation and arbitration process of the Kastellorizo's islets was matter of property as the previous chapter briefly summarized. Since the islanders' vested properties in Anatolia were not subject to the rules and regulations of the Greek population exchangees' properties due to the Italian sovereignty, an important ambiguity about their fate had occurred. The different citizenship statuses of the Greek islanders together with the complex history of the Dodecanese regarding the ambiguity of the sovereignty of the islands beginning with 1912 had differentiated the islanders from other displaced people.

As the previous chapter suggested, the first approach of the Italians was to constitute a Turkish-Italian joint commission which could not be achieved in the political and military conditions of the time.⁴⁴⁶ However, as a result of the relative détente in the relations, Italians began to bring the issue onto the agenda again and sometimes tried to discuss the issue with the Turkish officials within the framework of the islets negotiations. The case of a Greek islander, Manglis, seems important for both its ability to show how complicated was the issue and displaying the changing attitudes of the parties in the matter.

Mr. Manglis, from Kalimnos, had properties in Muğla. Manglis had begun to make efforts for his property after Lausanne in the sense that he was one of the petitioners who had applied to the Dodecanesian Administration which had received

⁴⁴⁶ For more information, see Chapter 3.

thousands of them beginning with 1923.⁴⁴⁷ In 1925 and 1926, when Manglis had individually appealed to the Turkish authorities for a restitution or restoration of his property and individually dealt with the case, Italy turned his case into a diplomatic trump card in the face of Turkey, which accused the Italian administration of the Dodecanese with the expropriation of the Muslim property on the islands.⁴⁴⁸ In addition to the tactic of menacing Turkey based on the property issue which was obviously political and disturbing, the Italians, who gave up the commission idea due to the aforementioned reason, highlighted the necessity of a property analysis case by case, rather than dealing with the entire problem.⁴⁴⁹ In this sense, the case of Manglis was always at the top of the agenda within the contacts although no progress on the issue was obtained until 1928.

In 1928, the opinions about the Dodecanesian properties evolved into another dimension both based on the détente in the relations and based on the decision for arbitration. The documents display that the traffic about the properties between the parties increased and this augmentation reflected also into the case of Manglis. In one of his letters to the Dodecanese authorities, Manglis stated that he had received a note saying that the Turkish Ministry of Interior had decided to give the restitution of the property to the claimant.⁴⁵⁰ The Italian officials interpreted the news as the illusion of Manglis, who was planning to go to Bodrum for the restitution, on the grounds that it

⁴⁴⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 986, “*Proprieta dei Dodecanesini in Anatolia*,” (The Properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia), 8 October 1923.

⁴⁴⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 989, “*Espropriazione a Rodi*,” (Expropriation in Rhodes), 23 July 1926.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, “*Proprieta dei Dodecanesini in Anatolia- M.Manglis*,” (Property of Dodecanesians in Anatolia, Mr. Manglis), 10 August 1928.

was not the first time that he had returned back to the islands with empty hands.⁴⁵¹

However, according to the Italian officials, in case of Manglis' failure with the restitution, Italy could insist on sending the property issue to the arbitration due to the fact that the relationship between Turkey and Italy was developing towards friendship, on the one hand, and that the issue was not political but economic in any case on the other hand.⁴⁵²

Obviously, the issue was both political and economic for the parties both of which had property issues in each other's territory. More important than the nature of the issue was the attitude of Italy, which stressed the arbitration as a means for a resolution. According to governor Lago, since Turkey was categorically negative about the property issues in negotiation process, Italy could have compelled Ankara to reach a decisive solution in terms of arbitration.⁴⁵³ As was suggested above, Mussolini said that he had indicated the good will of the Italians when accepting the arbitration unwillingly. According to Lago, now it was the turn of Turkey to show its positive intent.⁴⁵⁴ I argue that in this way, Rome would designate Ankara that arbitration could be applicable to any case between the parties, not being different from the one of the islets. That is to say, the arbitration decision regarding the islets in 1928 also brought new dynamics other than diplomatic deliberation for other problems concerning the Dodecanese.

In fact, 1928 had brought the complete questioning of the Aegean relations. While Turkey and Italy were trying to solve the islets problem together with other

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "*Proprieta Dodecanesini in Turchia, Reclamo Manglis*," (Property of Dodecanesians in Turkey- Reclaim of Manglis), 31 July 1928.

⁴⁵³ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "*Proprieta Dodecanesini in Anatolia*," (Property of Dodecanesians in Anatolia), 22 November 1928.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

issues, all the parties began to discuss the status-quo in the Aegean based on the islands, islets, and maritime frontiers, due to the changing relationship among the three powers; Turkey, Italy, and Greece. The Greek cession of two little islets to Turkey, namely Panaya and Passaro, close to the Anatolian coasts, shows that the boundaries in the Aegean Sea were being negotiated altogether and a new epoch was opened for all the interested parties.⁴⁵⁵

One of the most important indicators of this epoch, other than the Turkish-Italian negotiations or Turkish-Greek contacts, was the character of the relationship between Italy and Greece. These two powers also signed an agreement similar to the Turkish-Italian one in 1928. After signing, Venizelos made a declaration that Athens and Rome did not have any “Dodecanese question.”⁴⁵⁶ Although the Dodecanesian groups in foreign countries severely criticized this statement on the grounds that the oppressive Italian rule in the archipelago should have been terminated,⁴⁵⁷ it was obviously important in terms of designating the changing dynamics of diplomacy in the Aegean Sea, where even Greece seemed to sacrifice the Dodecanese in return for the Italian friendship in the conditions of 1928.

However, as an idiom suggests, the more the things change, the more they stay same. Two important matters indicated this continuity within change. While one of them was the return of the flag wars which had occurred in 1923 and 1927, the other was incidents specifically around the islets. These two should be analyzed in order to show the Turkish attitude towards the islets question apart from the decision of arbitration.

⁴⁵⁵ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, “*Isolotti Passaro e Panaya*,” (Islets of Passaro and Panaya), 23 February 1928.

⁴⁵⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, “*Patto Italo-Greco e Dodecanneso*,” (The Italian Greek Pact and the Dodecanese), 16 October 1928.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

This also will display the continuation of the mutual distrust and tension behind the scenes of better diplomatic relations and the much applauded arbitration compromise.

The starting point for the flag tension was March 1929. At that time, governor Lago received intelligence which stressed the manufacturing of a Turkish flag in Antalya, specifically in Kaş, in order to hoist over the islets of Kastellorizo, with the exception of Ipsili.⁴⁵⁸ The governor, in the same document, stressed the importance of such an action which should have been responded by the same reaction.⁴⁵⁹ Nearly at the same time; military mobility was noticed around the heights of Kaş in the shape of the placement of cannons and soldiers.⁴⁶⁰ That information was important at the time of the détente showing the relative character of it on the basis of the continuation of the military undertakings.

The intelligence of the governor turned into the reality in June 1929, in which the Turkish soldiers went to San Giorgio, one of the islets that Italy specifically claimed sovereignty, and hoisted the Turkish flag.⁴⁶¹ After hoisting the flag, they gave the abdication order to the numerous families living or using the islet to evacuate with their animals within three days.⁴⁶² Lago advised to the Italian authorities to use all the possible means to contact the Turkish authorities. According to him, these events not only disturbed the tranquility of the Kastellorizo population, but also provoked discontent within the fishermen groups who for centuries had exercised fishing around

⁴⁵⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Islets of Kastellorizo), 12 March 1929.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Notizie Turche*," (Turkish Notes), 10 June 1929.

⁴⁶¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Islets of Kastellorizo), 26 June 1929.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

the islets dependent on the island.⁴⁶³ Obviously, the character of the event was nearly same as the ones occurred in 1923 and 1924.

The Italian consular authorities contacted the Turkish officials several times. In a verbal note, it was declared that Turkey's behavior was trivial and that despite assurances from the Turkish Ministry of Interior about bringing down the flags, they were not hauled down; on the contrary, they were hoisted on all the islets.⁴⁶⁴ The reply of the Turks, which was sent via Numan Rıfat (Menemencioğlu) is interesting to note, because the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs underlined the unimportance of the situation owing to the fact that the cession of the islets to Turkey was clearly obvious.⁴⁶⁵ The Italian officials declared the absolute invalidity of the statement. It is not evident from the documents that under which conditions Ankara could claim the result of the process in terms of the cession of the islands, yet, it is clear that Turkey did not haul down its flags for a while.

In the meantime, the flags were prepared in the Dodecanese in order to hoist in the islands. The governor estimated that the Turkish soldiers could bring down the Italian flags, leading to an armed clash in the islets; thus he decided to send a torpedo boat to Kastellorizo to use if necessary.⁴⁶⁶ After this move of the governor together with the hoist of Italian flags to various islets, the Turkish authorities asked for the mutual

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Questione Bandiere sugli Isolotti*," (The Question of Flags in the Islets), 12 June 1929.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Bandiere su Isolotti*," (Flags on Islets), 19 July 1929.

lowering of the flags from the islets in order to leave this “prejudiced” situation until the end of the arbitration decision.⁴⁶⁷

After this correspondence, Turkey withdrew its flags from the islets with the exception of Volo and Dacia, which were extremely close to the Anatolian coast.⁴⁶⁸ Lago stated that he would not withdraw the Italian flags from the islets or the torpedo boat until the Turkish government brought down all of its flags.⁴⁶⁹ Despite the attempts of the parties for a solution to the flag wars in question, official correspondence shows that the problem was not resolved by September 1929. However, in September, Ankara sent a note stressing the withdrawal of flags in the remaining islets and asked the same from the Dodecanese authority, thus, terminating this “grotesque” problem as Lago called.⁴⁷⁰

As told above, apart from the flags hoisted on the isles, there was a problem of incidents occurring around the islets. These incidents were different from the above-mentioned poaching and smuggling cases because they took place in an area the sovereignty of which were under contestation, rather than the other parts of the Aegean. After one such incident during which the Turkish authority seized a fishing boat with its crew and equipment on the grounds that it had entered the Turkish territorial waters as well as poaching, Lago asked the Turkish government to protect the status-quo until a

⁴⁶⁷ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Castelrosso), 21 July 1929.

⁴⁶⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Bandiere Turche Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (Turkish Flag in the Islet of Kastellorizo), 28 July 1929.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Bandiera Turca Isolotto Caravola*,” (Turkish Flag in the Islet of Karavola), 4 September 1929.

decision was reached through the arbitration.⁴⁷¹ Yet, the status-quo idea of Lago was different from that of the Turkish side.

This difference was understood via another incident after which the parties began to negotiate the aforementioned status-quo around Kastellorizo again. This incident involved the Turkish intervention to the thirty fishermen who were fishing and sponge fishing near the islets. Ankara sent a note to Rome stating that the release of the Italian authorization of fishing in these waters was violating the status-quo, since the parties were bound to maintain the existing state of affairs until the Hague's decision.⁴⁷² In the internal correspondence of Italy among Rome, Rhodes, and Ankara, it was suggested that the authorities should have monitored the coast about whether the Turkish fishermen practiced these activities around the coasts before a promise was given for the termination of the fishing rights of the islanders.⁴⁷³

The answer that was given to Turkey officially designates the different understanding of status-quo in Rome. According to this counter note, since the waters around the islets could not be considered as the territorial waters of Turkey due to the ongoing arbitration process and since the fishermen had exercised the fishing around the islets from unmemorable times, it was not possible to ban these exercises without disturbing the status-quo to which the two governments had agreed to respect.⁴⁷⁴ In the same note, Italy also mentioned that the torpedo boat and the tugboat that Ankara claimed as sailing along the Turkish territorial waters were patrolling the flags on the

⁴⁷¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso, Incidente Cufos*," (Islets of Kastellorizo, Incident of Kufos), 14 February 1928.

⁴⁷² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Pesca nelle Acque degli Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Fishing Activity in the Islets of Kastellorizo), 20 September 1929.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, "*Nota Verbale*," (Verbal Note), 27 September 1929.

islets which could not be regarded as under the Turkish sovereignty.⁴⁷⁵ These incidents and to some extent tension would continue in these waters together with the claims of sovereignty, poaching, and smuggling, designating the continuity of the problematic nature of the island and mainland relations even in the detente conditions.

This problematic nature of the island-mainland relationship had two other reflections that were discussed under the framework the islets question. One of them was Karaada, which was a dependent islet of Kos instead of Kastellorizo, close to the bay of Bodrum. The other was the maritime frontier between Turkey and Kastellorizo about which the parties were making sensitive calculations. It should be emphasized that this maritime frontier issue would be extended to whole Dodecanese in the last years of this sub-period despite its limit on Kastellorizo at first.

Karaada, which is just across from Bodrum within less than four miles from the Anatolian coast and dependent on Kos, was an islet the sovereignty of which was contested by the Turks due to its proximity. It became an object of discussion beginning with the first days of the negotiation process. The fate of Karaada was always handled along with the fate of the islets. This relationship also can be seen from the fact that Karaada had been sent to the arbitration in the Hague together with the islets issue. It was meaningful that every time Turkey protested the Dodecanese administration and Italy based on a specific occasion for Karaada claiming the violation of its sovereign rights, Italy reminded the dependence of Karaada on Kos together with the negotiability of the issue in return for the islets of Kastellorizo.

For example, in 1928, after the Italians concluded an agreement about olive cultivation rights in the islet of Karaada, Turkey sent a protest note to Italy, asserting its

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

sovereignty.⁴⁷⁶ In his correspondence, Lago suggested that if Turkey sustained that the islets dependent on the Kastellorizo belonged to Turkey because of the fifteenth article of the Lausanne Treaty, which was silent about the islets of this island, than the Italians could easily claim the islet of Karaada dependent on Kos based on the same clause due to its clear provision about the islets of the Dodecanese in favor of Italy.⁴⁷⁷ However, he also underlined that Italy could abandon the islet of Karaada due to its proximity to Turkey, yet, with a promise from Ankara for a compromising attitude to the Italian interests in the islets of Kastellorizo, due to the fact that they were much more important than Karaada which did not have a fixed population and had a limited quantity of olives, fruits, and pastures.⁴⁷⁸

As the sovereignty of Karaada was handled together with the islets of the Kastellorizo, the historical path of the developments in this islet dependent on Kos followed a similar course of events with other islets. Flag wars, as explained in detail above, were simultaneously experienced over Karaada in 1929. After the Turkish flag was hoisted on this island, the Italians sent a tugboat to the coasts of Kos similar to the sending of the torpedo boat to Kastellorizo.⁴⁷⁹ Despite these precautions of the Dodecanese administration to oppose the Turkish claims on this tiny islet, Turkey preferred to behave as if the islet had already been given to itself.

Also, the officials of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed this understanding in such a way that during 1929, Turkey sent notes to Rome when the

⁴⁷⁶ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, “*Isolotti Arco-Cara-Ada*,” (Islet of Arco-Karaada), 27 August 1928.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Bandiere/Isolotti*,” (Flags/Islets), 26 July 1929, “*Bandiere su Isolotti*,” (Flags on Islets), 19 July 1929.

Italian ships or aircrafts came near Karaada, suggesting the intrusion of Turkish territorial waters and airspace.⁴⁸⁰ Although the Italians answered those kinds of protests every time with its direct sovereignty over the islet, even Mussolini was ready to sacrifice the islet in return for an advantage in the Kastellorizo issue, thus legitimizing the Turkish position.⁴⁸¹ It should be added that the Italians used Karaada not only as an item of negotiation, but also as an example of Turkish behavior. The Turks had forbidden fishing to the Italians near to its territory as opposed to the Dodecanese administration, which allowed Turks to come to Karaada both for fishing and for the use of the islet in the summer.⁴⁸²

The maritime delimitation between Kastellorizo Island and the Anatolian coasts were handled in order to address the issue of sovereignty of the islets. But, this delimitation issue later expanded to include the whole area including the Dodecanese. At this point, some of the terms and norms about maritime issues should be discussed. First of all, maritime boundaries were usually dependent on the delimitation of the territorial waters, which were generally accepted as three miles at those times.⁴⁸³ But this three-mile-clause, while could not be codified during the codification conferences of 1930, was also open to discussion among the states, some of which were prone to expand their territories to six miles.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Servolo di Aeromobili su Territorio Turco*,” (The Fly of Aircrafts in Turkish Territory), 23 April 1929.

⁴⁸¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 28 March 1929.

⁴⁸² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 992, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso e Isolotto di Cara Ada*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo and Islet of Karaada), 16 December 1929.

⁴⁸³ R.R. Churchill and A. V. Lowe, *The Law of the Sea* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.66-67.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

The Lausanne Treaty's understanding reflected the traditional three mile clause as the sixth and the twelfth articles stated. Yet, the adoption of a specific width of territorial waters did not become a proper solution to the Aegean geography. Since this geography included adjacent or opposite states, and since the territorial zones of the coasts in certain areas overlapped, what was needed for the Aegean was boundary delimitation.⁴⁸⁵ In the case of delimitation between opposite states, the existing international practices foresaw the agreement based on the median line as a boundary.⁴⁸⁶ Therefore, it should be notified during this process not only concerning the Kastellorizo case but also concerning the whole Dodecanesian boundary, the parties would occasionally underline that the demarcation of the boundary did not necessarily mean the determination of the territorial waters. But, they would also frequently discuss their stance about the territorial waters in general terms, differing from one case to the next.

While the sixth article states that “in the absence of provision to the contrary in the present treaty, islands and islets lying within three miles of the coast are included within the frontier of the coastal state,” the twelfth one suggests that “except where a provision to the contrary is contained in the present treaty, the islands situated at less than three miles from the Asiatic coast remain under Turkish sovereignty.”⁴⁸⁷ The calculations based on three miles, on the other hand, engendered complicated situations due to the geography of the area. In one of such calculations based on an existing map of the region, the Italians claimed that San Giorgio was outside of Turkish territorial

⁴⁸⁵ Deniz Bölükbaşı, *Turkey and Greece: The Aegean Disputes a Unique Case in International Law* (London: Portland: Cavendish Pub. 2004), p.95.

⁴⁸⁶ Churchill and Lowe, p.154.

⁴⁸⁷ For the Lausanne Treaty, see Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Lausanne Peace Treaty,” http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (accessed August 30, 2013).

waters though it was partly inside Italian waters, while Ipsili as another bigger islet in the region was totally inside the Turkish territory, but totally within the Italian territory, too.⁴⁸⁸

The Italians concluded that any record that could be interpreted as the will of extending the territorial waters to six miles should have been evaded for the sake of the islets.⁴⁸⁹ However, it was also suggested that these kinds of calculations did not give a decisive result because of the lack of detailed maps which had already been ordered from the officials, as was stated above. Since many islets were in the territorial waters of both Turkey and Italy, different ideas would be suggested in the following periods although the both sides supported their arguments also with other issues as in the geographical unity thesis of the Dodecanese governor.

Return to Diplomacy: The Final Phase of a Treaty

The years between 1927 and 1929 had passed with the deliberations between the parties in order to determine the issues to be solved and the possible means that would solve them. Despite the mutual diplomatic negotiations about the islets and other problems existent in the Aegean, the final decision became resorting to arbitration in The Hague International Court of Justice. In the meantime, the parties improved their defenses to present in the proceedings in the court based on different point of views. 1930, however, symbolizes different dynamics in the way of a solution. Beginning with this year, the

⁴⁸⁸ Pacco Dodecanneso 991, “*Frontiere Marittime nella zona di Castelrosso*,” (Martime Frontier in the zone of Kastellorizo), 5 March 1928.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

parties decided to resolve the problems not only through diplomatic means other than arbitration, but also as soon as possible owing to the fact that they desired to eliminate an important obstacle in the way of a closer diplomatic friendship. The return of the diplomatic option as a strong possibility brought the good neighborhood treaty to the forefront again.

One of the most important features of the period after 1930 was the fact that the parties made more concrete proposals as opposed to the preparation phase of the previous three years based on a holistic approach, which claimed the sovereignty of all the islets. In other words, diplomacy's give and take nature returned. As could be expected based on the previous years' proceedings, the aims of the Italian administration still had different layers on which it tried to forge the clauses about the territorial issues along with the economic ones.

In terms of the former, the Italian proposal focused on the attribution of all the islets close to the Anatolian coast to Turkey, such as Volo, Ochendra, Furnachia, Katovolo, Karavola, Alimentaria, Prasoudi, Marati, Voutzachi, Dacia, while the cession of the areas geographically and geologically linked to Kastellorizo such as Tchatulata, Pighi, Pano Makri, and Kato Makri, together with the islets of San Giorgio and Ipsili to Italy.⁴⁹⁰ Lago stated that since Turkey would face strategic difficulties after the recognition of Italian sovereignty over Ipsili and San Giorgio, Rome could sign an agreement that would foresee an unfortified category for those islets.⁴⁹¹ This draft of the proposal also left Karaada to Turkey, as was always discussed among the Italian

⁴⁹⁰ ASMAE, Pacco 994 Dodecanneso, "*Pro-memoria*," (Memorandum), 12 September 1930.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

officials.⁴⁹² One of the most important clauses of this proposal was the continuance of the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population in the islets ceded to Turkey, regarding the liberty of navigation, fishing, cutting timber, and fabrication of lime.⁴⁹³

This proposal of the Italian government would be valid until the end of the process. But in the meantime, the governor suggested another proposal, yet the Italian government discussed and rejected it. According to Lago, only a practical attitude based on the reciprocal Turkish and Italian renouncement of sovereignty on the islets and the rocks between Kastellorizo and the Anatolian Coast, leaving the navigation and fishing activities free to the population, could solve the problem.⁴⁹⁴ Rome, while acknowledging the practicality of the proposal, rejected to this approach on the grounds that territories not under a sovereignty of a state were always susceptible to occupation or acquisition.⁴⁹⁵

The Italian government also rejected a Turkish counter-proposal, in which Turkey insisted on dividing the border of Ipsili since the islet was partly within the territorial waters of Turkey, on the grounds that such a condition would mean direct Turkish sovereignty both on the islet and on the lighthouse existent in the islet.⁴⁹⁶

Turkey made other counter-proposals. According to the documents, Ankara had rejected

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ ASMAE, Pacco 994 Dodecanneso, “*Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo Islets), 19 November 1930.

⁴⁹⁵ ASMAE, Pacco 994 Dodecanneso, “*Isolotti dell’Egeo*,” (Aegean Islets), 24 December 1930.

⁴⁹⁶ ASMAE, Pacco 994 Dodecanneso, “*Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo Islets), 19 November 1930.

the Italian proposal especially in terms of the sovereignty over Tchatulata, Pighi, Pano Makri, and Kato Makri, which should have belonged to Turkey.⁴⁹⁷

It was suggested that the source of these counter arguments was the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, Marshal Fevzi (Çakmak), who considered the issue based on the dynamics of strategy and sometimes clashed with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁹⁸ The intervention of the General Staff into those negotiations continued until the end of the process, usually causing Italian resentment.

This situation can be analyzed based on the place of the General Staff in the Turkish decision making process. Despite the fact that General Staff was outside of the Council of Ministers and responsible only to the President, General Fevzi (Çakmak) was attending most of the Council meetings, showing that he had indeed have a say on the issues.⁴⁹⁹ Additionally, the Chief of General Staff had autonomy in directing the military affairs based on his relationship to the President Kemal (Atatürk) and the Prime Minister İsmet (İnönü).⁵⁰⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising that Chief of General Staff, who dealt with the security problems concerning the islands in the 1920s, intervened occasionally in the progress of the negotiations.

The proposals made during 1930 by the Dodecanese administration and the Italian consular officials emphasized the importance of a treaty of good neighborhood. In this respect, the Italians, but specifically Lago, made three important points for the good neighborhood treaty. The first point that the governor emphasized was the

⁴⁹⁷ ASMAE, Pacco 994 Dodecanneso, “*Questione Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (The Question of Kastellorizo Islets), 15 October 1930.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ William M. Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Turkish Military* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), p.72.

⁵⁰⁰ Dankwart A. Rustow, “The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic,” *World Politics* 11, n.4 (July 1959), p.549.

property of the Dodecanesians in Turkey which should have restituted the estates or should have given a proper indemnity in the case of destruction of the properties or any other impossibility to return them.⁵⁰¹

Second, there needed to be a commercial accord specifically between Dodecanese and Turkey through which a liberal regime of trade together with fishing/sponge fishing rights in the Anatolian territorial waters could take place.⁵⁰²

Third, a request from the Turkish authorities on the permissions for the Dodecanesians in order to enable them to circulate in the Turkish territory freely was necessary,⁵⁰³ because the islanders were making ongoing complaints about the Turkish attitude which imposed limitations in terms of entrance into Anatolia.

The attitude of Turkey regarding these proposals was neither rejection nor acceptance, but procrastination together with counter proposals. It was obvious that Turkey did not want to sign an agreement specifically regarding the permission of fishing to foreigners. In this sense, on the issue of commercial agreement between two entities, the Turkish strategy focused on compelling the Italians to add two more clauses to such an agreement. On the one hand, Ankara desired a clause that would provide the suppression of smuggling which was an absolute Turkish interest according to the Governor of the Dodecanese.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 994, “*Rapporti di Buon Vicinato con la Turchia*,” (Relations of Good Neighborhood with Turkey), 8 October 1930.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 994, “*Accordi con la Turchia*,” (Accords with Turkey), 23 May 1930.

On the other hand, the Turkish officials desired to add some measures for anti-Kemalist escapees in the Dodecanese,⁵⁰⁵ into the agreement. Indeed, both the Turkish authorities and the Dodecanesian administration was well aware the existence of the anti-Kemalist elements, specifically on Rhodes. After the elimination of the opposition in Turkey, the people who fled the country had tried to migrate either to Syria or to Rhodes. These escapees became an important strategy for Turkey regarding the unwanted commercial accords due to the possible Italian rejection to such a clause.

Indeed, the Italian official correspondence stressed that although good neighborhood treaty was vital for the economic life of the islands, it would be extremely dangerous to insert such a clause into the accords because of its power to disturb the relations of the administration in the islands with the Muslim community, which was anti-Kemalist not for political but for profound religious and social reasons.⁵⁰⁶ It was stated that Lago had always tried to impede the activities of the anti-Kemalists on Rhodes, and he would continue to do so, yet the desire of Turks could not be accepted within a formal accord.⁵⁰⁷ Obviously, Turkey had estimated the attitude of the Italians and aimed at slowing down the diplomatic process in an issue, which it had been against since the beginning, with those counterproposals.

The other issue, namely the properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia, also reflected the abovementioned dynamics. It is surprising to see that the position of Italy about these properties evolved through time again. As was stated above, the latest

⁵⁰⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Trattato di Buon Vicinato fra Turchia e Possedimento*,” (Good Neighborhood Treaty between Turkey and the Possession), 26 June 1931.

⁵⁰⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 30 June 1931.

⁵⁰⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Castelrosso, Trattato di Buon Vicinato*,” (Kastellorizo, Treaty of Good Neighborhood), 4 August 1931.

decision of Lago in terms of the Dodecanesian property was letting Turkey analyze and resolve the issue case by case without choking the Turkish government with the whole matter. However, during the diplomatic negotiations began in 1930, the Italian government wanted to settle the issue within the good neighborhood accords.

The Turkish attitude towards the properties did not reflect a clear-cut rejection on this issue too; but the response to the proposal was based on reciprocity which would open the matter into discussion also for the property of the Turks in the Dodecanese.⁵⁰⁸ The answer of the Italian side to Turkish claims was the inexistence of such a property problem of the Turks since the related articles of the Lausanne Treaty had already solved the property issues of Turkey in the former provinces of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰⁹ Despite this explanation, the correspondence belonging to the following months shows that the issue was handled based on the principle of reciprocity. Since the restoration option was a remote possibility together with the foundation of the objective mixed commissions, the arguments focused on the indemnity alternative regarding the properties.⁵¹⁰ But the deadlock in the property matter was obvious in the documents through which the officials stated that an agreement around the issue did not seem promising in the near future due to the impossibility to accept the figures that the Turkish government offered for the indemnity.⁵¹¹ In this regard, the Italian officials even talked about the loan that the Italian banks, like the one of *Banca Commerciale Italiana*, could give to Turkey for

⁵⁰⁸ ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 994, “*Accordi con la Turchia*,” (Accords with Turkey), 23 May 1930.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Trattato di Buon Vicinato fra Turchia e Dodecanneso*,” (Treaty of Good Neighborhood between Turkey and the Dodecanese), 19 June 1931.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

the indemnity issue, which could also be talked within the framework of Italian economic relations with Turkey in the interwar period.

The Turkish proposals challenged the demands of the Italian side for the Dodecanese regarding the economic relations, property issues, and free circulation permits, again based on the needs to suppress contraband, to increase custom points in the coastal areas, and to take measures for the anti-Kemalist elements in the islands. It became obvious in 1931 that reaching a compromise in those respects was nearly impossible for the parties. Tevfik Rüştü's (Aras) statement during this year proved this impossibility since he declared to the Italian officials that Turkey was not ready to define a good neighborhood treaty involving commercial relations and property issues.⁵¹² The Italian interpretation about the reasons for this declaration was grounded upon the inflexible behavior of the Chief of Turkish General Staff who even threatened the Council of Ministers with leaving his post if such agreements were signed between Turkey and the Dodecanese.⁵¹³ However, it was obvious that these issues were unacceptable for everyone in the higher echelons of Turkish politics given the similar ideological orientations of the political figures.

Whoever the responsible behind the Turkish rejection of such arrangements was, the negotiation process regarding a good neighborhood treaty had come to an end with this expression of Turkey. Thereafter, the agenda of the parties was reduced to three issues which were the partition of the islets in contestation, their disarmament, and the

⁵¹² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, "*Usi Civici Negli Isolotti di Castelrosso. Beni dei Dodecannesini in Anatolia e di Turchi nelle Isole Italiane dell'Egeo*," (Usage rights in the Islets of Castellorizo. Dodecanesian Property in Anatolia and the Turkish Property in the Italian Islands of the Aegean), 5 August 1931.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

usage rights of the Kastellorizo population over those islets that would be ceded to Turkey.⁵¹⁴

At this point, it is necessary to analyze the first and the third point in detail since a certain kind of consensus existed among the parties about the reciprocal disarmament of the islets regardless of their future sovereignty. In terms of the partition of the islets, the latest Italian proposal had been made in the first half of the 1931. According to this proposal, it was anticipated that the San Giorgio and Ipsili would be ceded to Italy while the interior side of Pano Makri and all other islets, situated in the east of the meridian passing from the western point of the Pano Makri, between Kastellorizo and the Anatolian coast would be given to Turkey.⁵¹⁵ Additionally, Italy claimed the islets existent in the ring of the Kastellorizo village center and of the radius between Kastellorizo and the San Stephano point.⁵¹⁶

The Turks rejected this proposal especially in terms of the cession of the little islet Prassudi to Italy, the maritime confine of which would pass about 250 meters outside of Pano Makri due to the fact that Turkey could not use the pass of Prassudi in case of a war.⁵¹⁷ The Italians defended their position against the Turkish military concerns about the individual islets, stating that in case of a war the island of Kastellorizo with the whole of their islets were under the range of Anatolia's simple batteries which would probably compel the Italians to clear all the group.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, "*Trattato di Buon Vicinato fra Turchia e Dodecanneso*," (Treaty of Good Neighborhood between Turkey and the Dodecanese), 19 June 1931.

⁵¹⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, "*Isolotti Castelrosso*," (Kastellorizo Islets), 6 April 1931.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Islets of Kastellorizo), 2 July 1931.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

It seems that the parties had already decided the fate of the major islets like the ones of Ipsili and San Giorgio during 1931. The officials, thus, were dealing with the minor islets like the abovementioned Prassudi, which would be ceded to Turkey at the end of the period. However, the main theme of the discussion between Turkey and Italy over the Kastellorizo had become the determination of the maritime border between the Anatolian coast and Kastellorizo in 1931. As was stated above, the issue of territorial waters both influenced the sovereignty of the islets and was influenced by them at the same time given the international norms of the time and the framework of the Lausanne Treaty. It should also be stated that although the Lausanne regulation of three miles, which was the generally accepted norm in the international arena at that time, constituted the basis of the discussions, the parties also discussed other options from time to time.

The documents display that Turkish and Italian position towards three miles varied according to the region that was being handled and to their mutual positions in certain areas. For instance, an Italian diplomat claimed that both the Turkish and Italian delegations did not want three miles regulation from the coast; but since the parties were bounded by the clause in question, they could not adopt another distance like six miles as Italy supported.⁵¹⁹ However, still, both sides discussed some options outside three-mile-clause of Lausanne depending on the location in question, as will be seen below. Regarding the area between Kastellorizo and Anatolian coast, it was obvious that Turkey could not accept any arrangement other than three miles due to the proximity of the area to its coasts. Actually, the majority of the islets were so close to each other that any

⁵¹⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 25 July 1931.

option other than drawing a line of “halfway” was not possible in order to determine the border, putting aside the implementation of three miles.⁵²⁰

Another matter was about the point where the territorial waters would begin in the sense that the desire of Italy was to choose Ipsili as a starting point because of its position in the southeastern side of Kastellorizo.⁵²¹ If Rome could persuade Turkey in terms of expanding its territorial waters to six miles not towards the Anatolian coast, but towards the open sea in the Mediterranean beginning with the southern point of the Ipsili, it would obtain the most desired result from the discussions of the delimitation.⁵²²

This suggestion was not the only one. Some views preferred obscurity for the territorial waters of the southern side of Kastellorizo. For instance, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs thought that demarcation of territorial waters in the southern part of the islet, spilling into an open sea, was not necessary since it would bind Italy with a specific clause regarding the territorial waters, about which any international treaty was non-existent.⁵²³ A demarcation point was necessary only for the northern side of Kastellorizo, which would be drawn on the basis of a median line anyway.⁵²⁴

The Turkish position, on the other hand, was against the six miles that Italy tried to implement for the southern side of the Kastellorizo although the Italians suggested that the understanding of Turkey for the territorial waters in general was close to the Italian one regarding the six miles as the Turkish behavior in the Codification

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 2 July 1931.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 24 August 1931.

⁵²⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 14 Temmuz 1931.

Conference of the League of Nations in 1930, in which the status of the territorial waters in the international law was discussed, showed.⁵²⁵ Apart from the length of the territorial waters, Turkish attitude favored the fixation of the territorial waters, as opposed to the Italian view.

The fixation of the territorial waters and also the boundaries between Turkey and Italy was so important for Ankara that in addition to the limitation between the Anatolian coasts and the Kastellorizo, the Turkish officials offered a new arrangement regarding the determination of the boundaries between the southwestern Anatolian coasts and the whole Dodecanese group. From the first half of the 1931 until the signing of the treaty in 1932, Turkish authorities occasionally asked for delimitation of the frontier between the Dodecanese and the Anatolian coast despite the fact that Italian authorities rejected it several times on the grounds that making an arrangement in this respect was not necessary since the Lausanne Treaty was clear both in terms of the criteria about sovereignty of the islets and the territorial waters.⁵²⁶ Although the Italian officials were sure that such a negotiation was not needed, the issue of maritime borders in the Aegean was discussed even after the conclusion of the 1932 treaty due to the insistency of Ankara, which threatened Rome with the rejection of the Turkish Chief of General Staff in terms of not approving the treaty unless the negotiations for the delimitation between Turkey and the Dodecanese would continue.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Castellorizo), 24 August 1931.

⁵²⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Castellorizo), 14 July 1931.

⁵²⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 2, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Castellorizo), 14 January 1932.

Similar to the insistence of Turkey on defining a border in the southeastern Aegean, the Italian insistence on the eve of the treaty was the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population on the islets ceded to Turkey. As was stated above, despite the ending of the negotiations for a good neighborhood accord based on the contrariwise declaration of Turkey, Italy continued to make efforts specifically for the economic relations of Kastellorizo with the facing coast this time. However, what the Turkish officials were against was not just the commercial treaty; they were also against the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population on the islets.

In this sense, although the Italian officials expressed that they would not continue to negotiations in case of the rejection of usage rights,⁵²⁸ they frequently made interviews with the Turkish officials throughout August 1931 in order to emphasize the importance of the ability to use the islets for the islanders. In one of them, Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) clearly stated that the General Staff was absolutely contrary to recognize the usage rights with the exception of liberty of navigation for the Kastellorizo population on the grounds that Turkey would not make further concessions of any kind.⁵²⁹ “Further concession” here means that the general framework of the division about the islets which had already been arranged one way or other.

In this sense, Turkey clarified its position, stating that it aimed to implement full sovereignty on the islets that would be ceded to Turkey.⁵³⁰ In the same colloquium the Turkish Minister said that if the Italian officials were not happy with this stance of Turkey on the usage rights, Ankara would be happy to return to the compromise signed

⁵²⁸ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Trattato di Buon Vicinato fra Turchia e Dodecanneso*,” (Treaty of Good Neighborhood between Turkey and the Dodecanese), 19 June 1931.

⁵²⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Spartizione Isolotti Egeo*,” (Partition of the Aegean Islets), 17 August 1931.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

for resorting to the Hague, which would probably decide much more advantageously for Turkish territorial claims.⁵³¹

After this explanation of the Turkish side, the Italian diplomats and politicians began to discuss the matter within their own circles while insisting on these kinds of rights during the negotiations at the same time. According to the Italian diplomats, Turkish opposition to the usage rights apparently reflected a “cavil” in the minds of the Turkish administration regarding the territorial settlement of the Kastellorizo islets about which the Hague could give a much more favorable decision, instead of a simple challenge to these rights in itself.⁵³² It is seen from the documents that resorting to arbitration was a high probability in November 1931, given the determinant stance of Turkish officials.⁵³³

This position of Turkey led the Italians to discuss the issues in their circles including the governor of the Dodecanese, Lago, who had always pushed the economic rights of the Dodecanesian people, throughout December 1931. But, this period of discussion showed that the center paid much more importance to the political settlement together with the diplomatic relations in the international arena, rather than the economic needs of the islanders. For instance, the officials in Rome occasionally stated that the territorial settlement reached through compromise was satisfactory for the Italians, thus, making the conclusion of the treaty as soon as possible important for the interests of

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Arbitrato Italo-Turco per Delimitazione Acque Territoriali Castelrosso Anatolia*,” (Italian-Turkish Arbitration for Anatolia-Castellorizo Territorial Waters Delimitation), 23 November 1931, “*Isolotti Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 15 December 1931.

Italy.⁵³⁴ Widespread orientation was to sign the territorial settlement treaty without a clause about usage rights, since the “disputes for these rocks lasting for a long time and today as a chronic illness had to be absolutely eliminated.”⁵³⁵

What could be done in terms of the usage rights was to save a possibility of further agreement through a Turkish declaration stating that the question of civic use would form the object of an examination in later negotiations for commercial accords in order satisfy the governor of the Dodecanese.⁵³⁶ The desires of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs collided with those of the Dodecanese to an extent that the capital thought that the obtained islets of Kastellorizo were sufficient for the needs of pasture, agriculture, and lime of the islanders while Lago’s demand for sailors regarding to be able to take refuge in Anatolian territorial waters during bad weather was not even worth discussing since international norms already provided sailors with such right.⁵³⁷

The higher echelons of the foreign ministry continued their criticisms of Lago in terms of the governor’s ongoing insistence on the increasing economic relations with the Anatolian coast. They emphasized the impossibility of such a request from the Turks while the population of Kastellorizo was exercising smuggling, as the Governor himself acknowledged.⁵³⁸ Therefore, it was not surprising that the foreign ministry gave the necessary permissions to its embassy in Ankara to sign the treaty with an assurance from

⁵³⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Promemoria*,” (Memorandum), 23 December 1931.

⁵³⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Una Lettera da Aloisi a Guariglia*,” (A Letter from Aloisi to Guariglia), 14 December 1931.

⁵³⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 22 December 1931.

⁵³⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Una Lettera da Aloisi a Guariglia*,” (A Letter from Aloisi to Guariglia), 14 December 1931.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

the Turkish authorities regarding the negotiations for the economic rights in the near future even though they were not making an essential question at the time being.⁵³⁹

In conclusion, Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) in the name of Turkey, and the Ambassador Baron Aloisi in the name of Italy finally signed the “Convention between Italy and Turkey for the Delimitation of the Territorial Waters between the Coast of Anatolia and the Island of Castellorizo” on 4 January 1932 in Ankara.

According to the clauses of the treaty, Volo, Ochendra, Fournachia, Kato Volo, Prassoudi, Tchatalloa, Pighi, Nissi-Tis-Pighi, Agricelia reef, Proussecliss (rock), Pano Makri, Kato Makri (including the rocks), Marathi, Roccie Voutzaky, Dacia, Nissi-Tis Dacia, Alimentaria, Caravola were ceded to Turkey together with Karaada, while San Giorgio (Rho), Ipsili, Dragonera, Ross, Psomi, Cutsumbora, Mavro Poinaki, Mavro Poinis, Psoradia, Polyphados were ceded to Italy.⁵⁴⁰

In addition to the partition of the islands as stated above, a detailed examination of the delimitation of waters between Kastellorizo and the Anatolian coast was made in the text of the treaty. In this respect, it is seen that the area in the north of the Kastellorizo Island was arranged on the condition of halfway sharing with the rule of three miles where the conditions could be applied.⁵⁴¹ Likewise, the situation in the south,

⁵³⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, “*Isolotti di Castelrosso*,” (Islets of Kastellorizo), 24 December 1931.

⁵⁴⁰ Article 1, 2, 3, For the electronic version of the text of the treaty see Hellenic Electronic Service “1932 Convention between Italy and Turkey,” <http://www.greece.org/hellas/treaty.html> (accessed October 3, 2013).

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., “To the North :

From this latter situated halfway Cape San Stephano (windward side) and Cape Gata the line of demarcation runs in a straight line to a point situated halfway between Cape San Stephano (windward side) and Cape Vathy;

From this point in a straight line to a point situated halfway between the Cape of Limenari and the Voutzaki rocks (Rocci Vutzaki);

From this latter point to a point situated halfway between the Dragonera island and the Voutzaki rocks (Rocci Vutchaki);

that the Italians had discussed throughout 1931 was concluded with the norm of three miles beginning with the southern side of Ipsili, contrary to the aspiration of the Italians either in terms of six miles or in terms of the obscurity of the territorial waters in the area, although the maritime frontier was regarded as “not under discussion.”⁵⁴²

The orientation of the treaty reflects the general character of diplomacy regarding “give and take.” In the first years of the process, the parties approached the issue with a holistic approach of winning or losing. For instance, the Turkish understanding to resorting to the Hague for the territorial settlement was related to the wish of winning the islets altogether. Although the Lausanne Treaty openly favored the Turkish position, as the time passed and the nature of the Turkish-Italian relations evolved based on the changing international and national dynamics, Turkey negotiated the partition of the islets, though the card of arbitration was always on the table.

Likewise, the Italian desire to solve all the complicated issues between the Dodecanese and the Anatolian coast through a good neighborhood accord dealing with the commercial relations between the coasts and property problem of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia was reduced to the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population in the islets that would be ceded to Turkey, at the end of the period. In this respect, I argue that this

From this latter point the line runs northwards to a point situated halfway between the north-east point of the St. George island (Rho) and the nearest point of the Anatolian coast north of that island;

From this point to a point situated halfway between Prassoudi and the south-west point of the St. George island (Rho);

From the latter point in a straight line to a point situated three miles south of the island of Volo where it joins the maritime frontier which is not under discussion.

The line of demarcation described in the present Article, which has been fixed island and islets on either side of that line, joins in an easterly direction at a point situated three miles south of the island of Volo, the general maritime frontier which is not under discussion between Turkey and Italy.”

⁵⁴² Ibid.,

“From this latter point the line runs to a point situated three miles south of the South Hypsili promontory where it joint the maritime frontier which is not under discussion.”

treaty, while solving a specific problem in the Aegean that had begun just after 1923, was neither an entire success nor a complete failure for both sides, yet being a typical case of diplomatic negotiation.

Continuity in Negotiations after 1932

The resolution reached in 1932 did not signal a final point for the negotiations about the islands and the islets. At the same time as the above-mentioned treaty was signed, an exchange of letters and the assurances took place between the parties in two respects. First were the usage rights as the Italians desired for the Kastellorizo population while the other was about a maritime boundary in the Aegean as Turkey demanded. These issues continued to be discussed nearly until 1934, when the Dodecanese dynamic in Turkish foreign and security policy would return to the older dynamics of the previous period. It also should be emphasized that the Italian authorities tried to negotiate these two issues together with each other whenever it was possible.

For the latter issue, it was stated above that Turkey proposed to determine a maritime boundary between Turkey and the Dodecanese during the complicated period of negotiations in 1931. Despite the stress of the Italian authorities in terms of the unnecessary character of the matter, there occurred an exchange of letters indicating future negotiations in 1932, on the same day that the treaty was signed. The Turkish Chief of General Staff was determined to resolve the issue in 1932 although the Italian officials were uncomfortable to an extent that they declared to the Turkish Minister of

Foreign Affairs that the General Staff should have had a limit about its demands.⁵⁴³

Indeed, the Italian diplomats regarded the Turkish General Staff as the reason for the unsafe ambiance in the Aegean with its unending demands,⁵⁴⁴ implying that this institution had some ambitions, like claiming the sovereignty of some of the islands and islets in the Aegean.

As a result, beginning from the first days of this delimitation of frontier, Italy reminded and cited the clauses of Lausanne Treaty to Turkey. The first one was the fifteenth article of the Lausanne, according to which Turkey ceded the islands and the dependent islets and rocks to Italy, because of the Italian suspicion of the possibility of a Turkish claim on Gaidaro dependent on Kalimnos but much more close to Turkey, and Farmaco dependent on Leros in the same way.⁵⁴⁵ The mentioned suspicion on the islets stemmed from the fact that in the previous years several incidents had occurred about these islets around which the boats of the Turkish customs revolved, leading to Italian charges about the intrusion of the Italian territorial waters.⁵⁴⁶ Indeed, Turkey claimed those two islets during the negotiations about the frontier during 1932, yet without a concrete result, and the incidents of breach alike persisted thereafter.⁵⁴⁷

The second clause that was crucial for Italy was the three miles condition of the sixth article of the Lausanne Treaty which was also used for the Kastellorizo case. The

⁵⁴³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, "*Isolotti di Castelrosso*," (Islets of Castellorizo), 14 January 1932.

⁵⁴⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, "*Accordi per la Ripartizione delle Isole dell'Egeo*," (Accords for the Repartition of the Aegean Islands), 14 January 1932.

⁵⁴⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, "*Delimitazione Acque Territoriali di Castelrosso*," (Delimitation of Territorial Waters in Castellorizo), 26 December 1932.

⁵⁴⁶ For example, ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 1, "*Abusi Polizia Marittima Turca*," (Abuse of the Turkish Maritime Police), 18 February 1931 and "*Polizia Doganale Turca nelle Acque del Possedimento*," (Turkish Custom Police in the Waters of the Dodecanese), 15 May 1931.

⁵⁴⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, "*Operazione Abusiva di Polizia Marittima da Parte di Autorita Turche*," (Abusive Operation of Maritime Police by the Part of the Turkish Authorities), 6 February 1933.

Italian defense of the three miles clause was ironic because in the Kastellorizo case, the officials had declared their understanding of the territorial waters as six miles rather than three, particularly for the southern side of the island. However, in this case, the same irony was also valid for Turkey which defended three miles in Kastellorizo, but six miles for the Dodecanese.⁵⁴⁸ Therefore, the parties tried to find formulas to cope with this perplexity in their position for different cases.

In this sense, for instance, the Italian diplomats seemed to be locked in since they defended the six miles in the territorial waters suggesting that the three –mile-regulation of the Lausanne Treaty was not about the territorial waters, but about the determination of the sovereignty of the islets.⁵⁴⁹ Therefore, in order to overcome this difficulty in the negotiations, Rome declared that this delimitation would be made not in order to determine the territorial waters, which was an “unilateral” act of sovereignty rather than a multilateral agreement, but in order to draw a median line between the coasts for determining the sovereignty of the islets the situation of which were not obvious under the framework of the fifteenth and the sixteenth article of Lausanne Treaty, thus making acquisition of an islet by Turkey nearly impossible.⁵⁵⁰

In addition, similar to the previous years of this sub-period, Italy integrated the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population in the ceded islets with this delimitation issue towards the summons of the Governor of the Dodecanese, who regarded the delimitation unnecessary unless usage rights were given to the Kastellorizo population regarding free

⁵⁴⁸ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Delimitazione Marittima Frontiera Italo-Turca*,” (Delimitation of the Italian-Turkish Maritime Frontier Delimitation of the Italian Turkish Maritime Frontier), 26 December 1932.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

navigation, free fishing and sponge fishing, right to make agriculture, to cut timber, to make husbandry, to make coal and lime.⁵⁵¹

Turkey, on the other hand, insisted on the delimitation in order to expand its sovereignty and control in the sea through territorial waters and the claim of Gaidaro and Farmaco. In order to reach this goal, Ankara did not even ratify the Kastellorizo treaty throughout the year, thus leading to anxiety in Italian political circles about whether this delay was based on the functioning of the Turkish Grand National Assembly or it had some other reasons about the existing ratification matter.⁵⁵² Rome knew very well that postponement in the ratification process was directly related to the delimitation of frontier between the Dodecanese and Anatolia in the absence of which the General Staff had already declared its rejection of the 4 January 1932 Convention. It was with this knowledge that Italy delayed the ratification of the treaty until the last days of 1932 in order to hinder the Turkish authorities to unite one issue with another.⁵⁵³ However, despite the moves of Italy in this respect, Turkey did not ratify the Kastellorizo Convention until the verbal note about delimitation was signed.

For the usage rights matter, Turkey did not change its position shown in the good neighborhood accords. The officials suggested the treatment of the issue as a material of local authorities, in other words, without a formal understanding.⁵⁵⁴ Since the 1932 convention had not been ratified yet, the population of Kastellorizo was still using some

⁵⁵¹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, “*Delimitazione delle Acque Territoriali ed Usi Civili*” (Delimitation of the Territorial Waters and the Civil Use), 26 January 1932.

⁵⁵² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, “*Delimitazione Acque Territoriali di Castelrosso*” (Delimitation of the Territorial Waters of Kastellorizo), 29 September 1932.

⁵⁵³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Delimitazione Marittima Frontiera Italo-Turca*,” (Delimitation of the Italian-Turkish Maritime Frontier), 26 December 1932.

⁵⁵⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, “*Frontiera Marittima Italo-Turca*,” (Maritime Frontier of Italy and Turkey), 24 June 1932.

of the islets economically yet with the existence of incidents. These incidents were important examples for Lago who justified his arguments about the necessity of a formal commercial agreement not only for the whole Dodecanese but also for Kastellorizo in specific.⁵⁵⁵ However, it was obvious that Turkey did not have any intention for such agreements since the beginning of the period, as the debates of this chapter designated.

The decision that the Turkish government took in October 1932 about the necessity to prescribe visas from the Turkish consul in Rhodes for the population of Kastellorizo for their every voyage between the island and the mainland⁵⁵⁶ shows well that Turkey actually had a reverse understanding of the relations between the islands and the mainland. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that when a verbal note was concluded in the end of the 1932 about the delimitation of the waters between Turkey and Italy, any simultaneous development did not take place about the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population despite the efforts of Italy to handle the issues together.

After the studies of the commissions about the delimitation composed of civil and military bureaucrats of the parties, a verbal note was concluded on 28 December 1932. In the verbal note, it was suggested that this document did not determine the territorial waters of the parties but the line of maritime frontier, although they could be same wherever the distance between the parties was less than twelve miles.⁵⁵⁷ Since the

⁵⁵⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, “*Incidente fra Pescatori Dodecannesini e un Doganiere Turco*,” (Incident between the Dodecanesian fishermen and a Turkish Custom Officer), 16 March 1932.

⁵⁵⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 3, “*Movimento Passeggeri tra Castellorosso e l’Anatolia*,” (Movement of Passengers between Kastellorizo and Anatolia), 9 October 1932.

⁵⁵⁷ Article 1 and 2: “1. *La ligne frontiere est tracees pour fixer l’appartenance des territoires possedes par les deux Etats et non pour separer les eaux de la mer.*
2. *Toutefois de la distance minima entre les territoires des deux Parties jusqu’ a une distance de 12 milles (1 mille 1852 m) la ligne frontiere determinera la souverainete des deux Pays sur les eaux de la mer. Il est par consequent bien entendu que dans les Parties ou cette distance depasse 12 milles la ligne frontiere ne porte aucun prejudice a la fixation de l’ etendue des eaux*

median line regulation was applied to the territorial waters up to twelve miles, it would not be wrong to suggest that the parties agreed on the six miles rule for their borders. However, the boundary line passed through the “ten” miles south of the islet of Volos, the three miles south of which had been accepted by the line of demarcation between Turkey and Italy in the north by the treaty of Kastellorizo.⁵⁵⁸

The Italian officials discussing the verbal note in Rome rejected this clause on the grounds that the insistence of Turkish authorities on the ten miles clause was probably due to their desire to expand their borders in *sui generis* mode as opposed to the clause of the previous convention.⁵⁵⁹ The same ten miles word was also valid for Tugburnu and Khelidonia,⁵⁶⁰ showing that the only limit for boundaries was not six miles. It should be emphasized that governor Lago opposed keenly to the approval of the verbal on the grounds that extension of the Turkish territory to six miles without some economic rights for the Dodecanesians would be a complete disaster since it would further limit the fishing and navigation rights of the islanders,⁵⁶¹ leaving the ten miles clause aside.

This verbal note never came into force because of its uncompleted legal process owing to the rejection of the various officials together with the changing relationship

territoriales des deux Pays.” Hellenic Electronic Service “1932 Convention between Italy and Turkey,” <http://www.greece.org/hellas/treaty.html> (accessed November 8, 2013).

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., “*10 milles au sud de l’iflet de Volos.*”

⁵⁵⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Delimitazione Acque Territoriali Italo-Turche,*” (Delimitation of Turkish-Italian Territorial Waters), 24 April 1933.

⁵⁶⁰ Hellenic Electronic Service “1932 Convention between Italy and Turkey,” <http://www.greece.org/hellas/treaty.html> (accessed November 8, 2013). “*Le point II romain est situe a 10 milles au Sud de Trugh Burnu. Le point III romain est situe a 10 milles au Sud de la pointe Sud de Khelidonia.*”

⁵⁶¹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Frontiera Marittima tra la Turchia e di il Possedimento delle Isole Italiane dell’Egeo,*” (Maritime Frontier between Turkey and the Possession of the Italian Islands of the Aegean), 24 January 1933.

between the parties after 1933. But, two important points should be made about this agreement. First of all, the stance of Turkey about the maritime delimitation did not seem conservative in the sense that Turkish officials during the negotiations looked for ways to expand their borders in the southern part of the Aegean Sea compared to the norms of the day. This attitude of Ankara constitutes a difference from the current stance of Turkish foreign policy which still deals with similar issues in the Aegean Sea.

Second, this verbal note includes a clause about the rocks of Imia (Kardak) over the sovereignty of which Turkey and Greece came to the brink of a war in 1996. According to the thirteenth article of the verbal note, one point of the maritime frontier was drawn in-between Kardak (Imia) and Kato.⁵⁶² Today this agreement forms the basis of the Greek claims on the grounds that the Kardak was mentioned as the territory of Italy, in front of Turkish territory of Kato. As a result, this agreement is also important for its involvement in a recent problem which has not been solved yet although it should be reminded that the verbal is not binding for Turkey since it is not valid.

While the parties succeeded to fulfill the one requirement of the assurances given on the day of 4 January 1932 with this verbal note, the other issue of the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population remained unresolved in spite of the efforts made to unite the matters. Putting aside a resolution of the matter, the relationship of Kastellorizo with Anatolia had already been hardened at the end of the 1932, with the visa obligation for the Kastellorizo population. The second blow to the relations came with the Turkish decision which charged all the ships from Kastellorizo with coming to Kaş first for the

⁵⁶² “*a moitié distance entre Kardak [Imia] (R.k.s.) et Kato I. (Anatolie).*” Hellenic Electronic Service “1932 Convention between Italy and Turkey,” “<http://www.greece.org/hellas/treaty.html>” (accessed November 8, 2013).

necessary permits, and after the end of destination with returning to Kaş again for necessary controls before going back to Kastellorizo.⁵⁶³

These kinds of applications were hardening the commercial contacts with regard to time and costs. In terms of trade, the Italian officials claimed that even the Turks were not happy with the implemented restrictions about which they complained to the Prime Minister Ismet Paşa (İnönü) who visited Antalya.⁵⁶⁴ In terms of the usage rights, on the other hand, the Italians were uncomfortable because they defined the attitude of Turkey as a breach of the assurance given with the Kastellorizo treaty, which should be reminded to Turkey as soon as possible.⁵⁶⁵ However, the reminders and constant calls from Lago did not change the Turkish position.

This dissertation argues that the usage rights that the Italian authorities demanded were neither compatible with the economic understanding of the Republic beyond the fear of smuggling or poaching, nor compatible with the military understanding of the period. In this regard, the influence of the military dynamics was obvious in the statement of the Chief of the General Staff who concluded the matter, saying that since the issue was under the framework of the territorial waters, in other words, under the framework of military, the Italians should not have discussed the matters with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but with the General Staff.⁵⁶⁶ In 1934, any hope of

⁵⁶³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Notizie Doganali sulla Turchia*,” (Customs Notes on Turkey), 9 March 1933.

⁵⁶⁴ It is necessary to note that the visit of Ismet Pasha had also some political-military reasons, which would be mentioned in the following chapter. ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Visita Capo Governo e Presidente Repubblica Turca nella regione di Adalia*,” (Visit of Prime Minister and President of the Turkish Republic to the Antalya Region), 6 February 1933.

⁵⁶⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Usi Civici dei Dodecannesini*,” (Usage rights of the Dodecanesians) 28 January 1933, and “*Usi Civici Castelrossini*,” (Usage rights of the Kastellorizo population), 16 May 1933.

⁵⁶⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Questione Relative alle Isole dell’Egeo*,” (Questions Related to the Aegean Islands), 27 October 1933.

achieving some kind of agreement between the parties was not realistic, about which the Italian Embassy in Ankara stated, “the actual phase of the Italian-Turkish relations, motivated by the anxiety coming partly from our activity in the Aegean Islands, do not allow a certain resumption of the question in the near future.”⁵⁶⁷ In short, the parties shelved this question in 1934, due to the return of the military dynamic into the area.

Even if those discussions and the failure about the usage rights seemed to have impacts mainly on the diplomatic and military relations between the parties based on the documents, the hardening relations between and the Anatolian coast had also economic results which deserve an emphasis here. The major uprising in Kastellorizo which occurred in 1934 is important in this regard. Although the Greek historiography emphasizes the nationalistic character of the uprising in the island, and the historians Nicholas Doumanis and Nicholas Pappas reject this nationalistic historiography indicating the increasing taxes in the island as the major cause;⁵⁶⁸ the governor Lago stressed the relations with Turkey as the most important reasons of the uprising in the island. According to him, the people of Kastellorizo suffered from the world crisis in a harsher way than the other islands, because of the decreasing commercial traffic with the Anatolian coast and because of the deprivation of the islets ceded to Turkey.⁵⁶⁹ But even Lago, writing those telegrams to his capital, was aware of the futility of making new appeals to the Turkish government in the new dynamics of 1934. This example of the uprising could be analyzed within the framework of the island-mainland relations in terms of the determinant character of the latter on the former in economic matters.

⁵⁶⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo), 16 June 1934.

⁵⁶⁸ Nicholas Doumanis and Nicholas Pappas, “Grand History in Small Places: Social Protest on Kastellorizo (1934),” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 15, no.1 (May 1997), p.103

⁵⁶⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo), 3 March 1934, “*Incidenti Castelrosso*,” (Kastellorizo Incidents), 14 March 1934.

When this epoch came to an end with the return of the tension to the Aegean, the only issue resolved was the territorial settlement of the Kastellorizo islets. The other issues; the good neighborhood treaty regarding the commercial and economic relations of the Dodecanese with the fronting mainland and the property problems of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia, the usage rights of the Kastellorizo population on the ceded islets, and the delimitation of the Turkish-Italian frontier in the Aegean despite the existence of a verbal note; could not be concluded with success. Therefore, it should be suggested that the limit of the Turkish-Italian *détente*, which could not stop the feelings of mutual distrust, could be observed mostly in the Dodecanesian affairs, about which I argue that they constitute the basis of the Turkish-Italian diplomacy throughout the interwar years.

The continuation of the incidents in the Aegean throughout the period and the persistence of the military enforcement to some extent even in the closest time of the relations also designate the limits of this *détente*. However, it could not be denied either that the dynamics of the Dodecanese evolved from the military perspective of the previous years to the diplomatic and legal one in Turkish foreign and security policy in this sub-period. Even if the contacts was contingent upon mostly diplomatic understanding rather than the military ones, all of the discussions made in detail above, were the proof of how these islands, even the tiniest one, were problematic for the mainland Turkey.

This chapter, while designating the problematic nature of this geography, also exceeds the boundaries of the period of this dissertation. This interim period is highly important for Turkish historiography in a way that it shows the starting point of specific

problems that survive even today in the Aegean Sea. The territorial waters and the sovereignty of some islets and the rocks in the Aegean constitute major contemporary disputes between Turkey and Greece. In this sense, this chapter showed that those problems in Aegean Sea are not unique to the post-1950s within the realm of the Turkish-Greek relations; instead, they date back to 1923, which legally constituted a border between the islands and the mainland.

CHAPTER 5

THE RETURN OF THE ANIMOSITY: THE RE-MILITARIZATION OF THE DODECANES AND THE QUEST OF TURKISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY, 1934-1939

The relative détente period in terms of the Turkish tie with the Dodecanese indicated an alteration beginning with 1933 and came to an end irrevocably in 1934, owing to the dynamics of the Aegean as well as those of the Mediterranean, in the broader sense. The archival material concerning the Dodecanese and the Turkish foreign policy shows clearly that the legal and diplomatic character of the contacts of the previous period transformed into a military tone similar to the first years of the Republic. This chapter examines this military tone in the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese aiming to display the strength of these little islands in shaping the Turkish foreign and security policies in a period in which the world advanced towards a second general war step by step.

The “return of the animosity” statement in the title of this chapter is a reference to the period between 1923 and 1927, because some of the dynamics between these two epochs were similar. For instance, the military tone in the Aegean relations stemmed from the fact that Italy had begun to act within the framework of military understanding in a way that the fortification of the islands, which had decreased even if not ceased in the previous period, intensified again. The rising military activity in the islands together with an aggressive discourse of Italian foreign policy resulted in increasing Turkish suspicions towards the Dodecanese, which was reformulated as a source of aggression

by Ankara, which had never given up its military understanding of the islands, but kept it in the background during the previous period.

In addition to the military fortifications and the return of the serious tension accordingly, another important similarity with the period between 1923 and 1927 was the action-reaction chain that the military reinforcements brought onto the scene. The two coasts influenced each other's behavior in terms of security understanding. The Turkish actions in the coastal regions, which will be presented in the following pages in detail, display an absolute parallelism vis-à-vis the Dodecanese Islands.

However, this period was not just a replica of the period in comparison either. Two phenomena differentiate these two eras. On the one hand, in Chapter Three, it was emphasized that Turkey did not have many alliances in international politics just after the foundation of the Republic, which had several diplomatic problems. Yet, in the 1930s, Turkish foreign policy had already overcome the difficulties that it had experienced in the 1920s.

By the second half of the 1930s, Turkey was an equal member of the international arena which had achieved self-realization and earned the respect of the other European powers through its successful and realist diplomacy. Therefore, in this period, the reaction of the Turkish authorities to the actions in the Dodecanese did not occur only within the realm of military as it had been usually the case in the previous period of tension. Instead, Turkey, in addition to its military undertakings in the coastal regions, set the diplomacy in motion in order to secure its territories in the Mediterranean. In this regard, this chapter will also examine the Turkish diplomatic initiatives, majority of which reflect the importance of the Dodecanese dynamic in Turkish foreign policy.

On the other hand, in the 1920s, the build-up of arms on the Dodecanese was mainly a problem for Turkey in particular, and disturbed Greece seldom. In contrast, the situation in the Aegean Sea became a concern not only for the Aegean countries, but also for the other European powers, specifically Britain, in the 1930s. In other words, since the actions of Italy in the Dodecanese disturbed the general balance of power in the Mediterranean, as the islands were transformed into an Italian fortress in the 1930s, it led to the internationalization of the area, going beyond the anxieties of solely Turkey or Greece. This internationalization, especially during the Abyssinian Crisis in 1935, seems to have been one of the reasons for the harmony between Turkey and other anti-revisionist powers in Europe in the last years of the 1930s, drawing Turkey and Britain closer.

This chapter examines those links together with the orientation of Turkish foreign and security policy until the Second World War, from both a national and international perspective. However, before going into the details about the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese together with the major foreign and security issues, it is necessary to analyze the state of affairs in Europe, in which the direction of events was going towards a full-scale war. In this way, Turkish foreign and security policy vis-à-vis the Dodecanese would be located in a much more global context.

The European Great Powers on the Eve of the Second World War

For Turkey, 1933 saw a change in the course of events about the Aegean Sea in which the tension began to rise. When the European scene is kept in mind for the same year, on

the other hand, it is seen that the continent was experiencing one of the most important turning points of its history; the rise of Nazi Germany. Although the division between the revisionist and anti-revisionist powers in Europe dated back to the end of the First World War, the coming of Nazi Germany onto the scene became a considerable weight for the revisionist side in the 1930s.

Whatever the reason behind the rise of Nazism that is still being discussed by the social scientists,⁵⁷⁰ after the coming of Hitler to the power, Germany brought the continent to a general war gradually based on its expansionist and aggressive foreign policy aims. Indeed, the Declaration of Principles, which was promulgated in 1933, considered the revision of the Versailles Treaty as Germany's "most pressing concern," at that period.⁵⁷¹ Thereafter, it was not surprising to see that Germany tried to break the "chains" of Versailles one by one.

The first moves of Hitler in this regard were the German withdrawal from the League of Nations and from the World Disarmament Conference within the framework of the League of Nations, in 1933,⁵⁷² because the Nazis regarded expansionism and rearmament as vitally important goals for the future of the Reich, against the notions of

⁵⁷⁰ People working within the foreign policy area tend to pursue the origins of Nazism, and relatedly the war, in the harsh conditions of the Versailles Treaty. For a critical approach tending to balance this idea with more socio-economic understanding, see Alan Sharp, "The Versailles Settlement: The Start of the Road to the Second World War?," in *The Origins of the Second World War, An International Perspective*, edited by Frank McDonough (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2011), pp.15-33.

⁵⁷¹ Aristotle A. Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), p.112.

⁵⁷² Disarmament Conference was first held in 1932, under the auspices of the League. Measures for limiting the armed forces and weapons, for abolishing chemical warfare, for constituting an international police force were proposed during the meetings. After the rise of the Nazis, who wanted rearmament rather than disarmament, Germany left the conference. United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements: Texts and History of the Negotiations* (Washington D.C.: United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1990), p.5.

the League. Although some initiatives before, like the Four-Power Pact in 1933 among Germany, France, Britain, and Italy, had encouraged Berlin to slow the pace of German rearmament as well as to reduce the likelihood of *Anchluss*,⁵⁷³ (union) as an aim of Hitler since the beginning; the above-mentioned withdrawal had terminated the pact since it had been concluded under the framework of Geneva,⁵⁷⁴ thus making the only option of deliberation among the Great Powers invalid. The German non-Aggression Pact with Poland in 1934 and the Saar's return to German jurisdiction in 1935 were the other diplomatic coups of the Nazi's program of revisionism.⁵⁷⁵ On the military side of the story, the declaration for an air force and the introduction of conscription in 1935 reinforced the rearmament motive of Germany.⁵⁷⁶

It should be kept in mind that Germany used also other means for its expansionist strategy. As Berend suggests, after 1933, the Nazis aimed at creating a large economic area that would be self-sufficient in concert with the several Eastern European countries as Germany's backyard of raw material.⁵⁷⁷ The consequence of the bilateral barter treaties, which were also called clearing agreements, was the incorporation of the area to the German *lebensraum* (living space) in which the Nazi-led economic system progressed hand in hand with the political and military domination.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷³ Robert Mallett, *Mussolini and the Origins of the Second World War, 1933-1940* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p.21.

Anchluss, as a German word, means "unification." For the German history, it indicates the unification of Austria with Germany which occurred in 1938.

⁵⁷⁴ Lowe and Marzari, p.227.

⁵⁷⁵ Jürgen Förster, "Germany's Twisted Road to War, 1919-1939" *The Origins of the Second World War*, p.115.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), p.273.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 276.

Indeed, when the Second World War broke out, the political systems of the Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European countries had become either authoritarian or totalitarian within a close relationship with the Axis. At this point, it should be reminded that, the similar clearing agreements had also been signed between Germany and Turkey, which worried about the same kind of political pressure owing to the German domination in the Turkish import and export rates after 1934.⁵⁷⁹ Turkey had made great efforts to balance the power of the Germans in its economy with specifically Britain throughout this period,⁵⁸⁰ being one of the successful exceptions in terms of escaping from the path of other countries in the region at issue.

While those actions and strategies of the Nazi Germany were intensified through the time, the alliances or the animosities among the powers of Europe were invented and reinvented based on the developments. The traditional foreign policy approach of Britain on the continent was to protect the balance of power until 1937, after which “appeasement” was adapted as a strategy, which is still being discussed regarding its suitability.⁵⁸¹ In the way of keeping the traditional balance of power, Britain constituted formal/informal alliances with France, Italy, Holland, Belgium while taking up with the rearmament especially vis-à-vis the Nazis in Europe and the militaristic Japanese in the Far East.⁵⁸² Turkey would be another power with which Britain would shake hands in the Balkans based on this balance of power notion specifically after 1935.

⁵⁷⁹ İlhan Uzgel “Batı Avrupa ile İlişkiler,” in *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne*, p.305.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ For more information about the details of British grand strategy in the 1930s, see B. J. C. McKercher, “National Security and Imperial Defense: British Grand Strategy and Appeasement, 1930-1939,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 19, no.3 (2008), pp.391-442.

⁵⁸² Ibid., pp.415-417.

The British and the French could be differentiated from each other in terms of the pragmatic side of the former as opposed to the uncompromising attitude of the latter especially over reparations, disarmament and the problem of Germany during the 1930s.⁵⁸³ However, despite the existence of divergence between the French and British foreign and security policies until 1935, the events thereafter re-consolidated this traditional alliance, making the reactions of these two powers analogous on the eve of the World War II.⁵⁸⁴ But the existence of different approaches and actions until 1935 shows the vague character of the interstate relations, alliances and animosities in Europe in the 1930s.

The relationship between France and Italy is an important example in this respect. Although they were traditional enemies in the Mediterranean, their interests brought these two powers closer to each other for a period since the rise of Nazi Germany was dangerous also for Italy the concern of which was South Tyrol in specific, and *Anschluss* in general. For this reason, it is argued that Italy behaved like an anti-revisionist power for a specific period of time concerning the inter-great power relations,⁵⁸⁵ with the fear about the fate of Austria, the fall of which would be dangerous for the borders of Italy. The Stresa Front, through which Britain, Italy, France emphasized the independence of Austria as well as the common stand against the unilateral repudiation of treaties that could endanger the peace in Europe,⁵⁸⁶ was a direct

⁵⁸³ Richard Davis, *Anglo-French Relations Before World War I: Appeasement and Crisis* (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.7.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.4. It should be noted that this anti-revisionist stance was only valid for the relationship with the Great Powers. The revisionist/aggressive stance of Italy in this period will be seen in the following sections of this chapter.

⁵⁸⁶ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1936), v.1935, part.1, p.159-161.

result of these anti-German motives, although this stance, which tried to reaffirm the framework of Locarno Treaties of 1925, did not last long in the conditions of 1935.⁵⁸⁷

One of such incidents in 1935 was not a German-led action as expected. Instead, it came from Italy, which attacked Abyssinia for colonial reasons in October 1935. Although before the war Italy and France had signed the Mussolini-Laval Accords through which France gave free hand to Italy in Africa in return for support against Germany,⁵⁸⁸ the French-Italian agreement came to an end within a short period of time, similar to the fate of the Stresa Front, owing to the change in the balance of power in the Mediterranean during the Abyssinian Crisis.

As a result of this Italian act, Britain felt threatened regarding the safety of its colonies in the Middle East,⁵⁸⁹ leading to the termination of the artificial Italian friendship with Britain and France and to the further determination of the alliances in Europe that would carry the world into a war. The Abyssinian Crisis in the Mediterranean is very important for the future of the Turkish foreign policy as well, because as will be shown below, it was the major reason that brought Britain and Turkey into closer contact.

⁵⁸⁷The Locarno Treaties were composed of seven agreements signed in 1925 between Germany, France, and Britain. These treaties' main themes were to constitute a European peace, as well as to secure the post-war settlements. However, while aiming at securing the borders, it has also been criticized owing to the fact that it secures the western borders of Germany, unlike the Eastern ones. In anyway, since it tried to achieve peace and peaceful solution to the territorial problems, the term "spirit of Locarno" is widely used. For more information, see Jonathan Wright, "Locarno: A Democratic Peace?" *Review of International Studies* 36, no.2 (April 2010), pp.391-211.

⁵⁸⁸G. Bruce Strang, "Imperial Dreams: The Mussolini-Laval Accords of January 1935," *The Historical Journal* 44, no.3 (2001), p.809.

⁵⁸⁹For more information about the Britain-Italian tension in the Mediterranean, see Robert Mallett, "The Italian Naval High Command and the Mediterranean Crisis, January-October 1935," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no.4 (1999), pp.77-102.

The disengagement of the Stresa Front and the Abyssinian crisis, made Germany and Italy to come closer to each other although the problem about the *Anschluss* was explicit. However, it would be seen that when the German annexation of Austria took place in 1938, the main framework of Axis in Europe had already been completed. Obviously, the conditions of the time had necessitated Mussolini to regard Austria as German while getting rid of the idea that German Austria could pose danger to the South Tyrol.⁵⁹⁰

But before *Anschluss*, it was again within these dynamics that Mussolini would not oppose the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936.⁵⁹¹ The same year also saw the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War between the General Franco's Nationalists and the Republicans into which the other powers of Europe interfered. While Italy and Germany together with Salazar's Portugal, sent help to the Nationalists, mainly the Soviet Union did so to the Republicans together with the International Brigades composed of the volunteers. The Spanish Civil War displays well the passive attitude of Britain and France in those years, especially when their constant refusal to send aid to the Republicans is kept in mind.⁵⁹² This policy, about which especially Britain would be accused of letting the Axis to act aggressively in Europe, could also be seen in the case of Sudetenland, which the Nazis annexed in 1938 without a challenge from the British, in addition to the above-mentioned case of *Anschluss* within the same year. The Second World War would begin within those dynamics in which the Germans invaded Poland as

⁵⁹⁰ Mallett, *Mussolini and the Origins of the Second World War*, p.82.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. p.76.

⁵⁹² Enrique Moradiellos, "The International Dimensions of the Spanish Civil War," in *the Origins of the Second World War*, p.322. Moradiellos argues that abstain of France in terms of help was directly related to Britain and their unwillingness to act with the Soviet Union as allies. p.323.

a last step just after the Italian invasion of Albania, one of the specific reasons that Britain and France finally gave up their appeasement policy towards these powers as their aggression appeared interminable.

The story of the world on the brink of the war was not just comprised of the battle among Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. The position of the USSR, the US, and the situation in the Far East were all decisive for the future course of events in the world. However, if the isolationist perspective in American foreign policy⁵⁹³ towards the European issues and the geographical proximity of the Far East are kept in mind, the position of the Soviet Union seems much more important, specifically for Turkish foreign and security policy.

Although the relations with the Soviet Union regarding the specific events within the realm of this dissertation will be analyzed below, it should be mentioned at this point that the foreign policy line of the Soviet Union could be evaluated in the context of Leninist pragmatism together with the foreign policy decisions given by instant reactions,⁵⁹⁴ rather than the categories of revisionism or anti-revisionism. For instance, the different economic and political outlook of the Soviets could not hinder the Union either from entering into the League of Nations in 1934, or from the rapprochement with France and Britain at some occasions during the 1930s due to the rise of Nazi Germany.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹³ For more information for the American Isolationism, see Selig Adler, *The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth Centurt Reaction* (New York: The Free Press, 1957).

⁵⁹⁴ Bülent Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1991* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p.3.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.36-39.

Likewise, the belief that the West would not stop the Nazis led the same Soviets to come closer with Germany.⁵⁹⁶ This resulted in an agreement like the one of Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact signed in 1939. Specifically for Turkey, on the other hand, this period was different from other sub-periods analyzed above in the sense that the relationship between Ankara and Moscow were hardened for the first time since the Turkish War of Independence, owing to the Montreux Convention signed in 1936, which became a turning point for the Turkish-Soviet relations since Turkey gained control over the passages through the Straits with this treaty rather than a mutual authority as the Soviet authorities desired.⁵⁹⁷ Thereafter, Turkey and the Soviet Union became an element of concern for each other from time to time, even if they had not turned into threat for each other yet.

As could be seen, the European scene on the way to the Second World War witnessed constant aggression from the side of the revisionists in different shapes and proportions. While the expansionist drive led Germany and Italy to aggression, it also created economic aims through which they tried to achieve domination. As a result of these aims together with the appeasement approach of Britain and France as well as with the volatile position of the Soviet Union, the whole Eastern European scene had fallen into the clutches of authoritarianism, economic and political dependence on either Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy on the eve of the Second World War.

Despite the German economic dominance based on the clearing agreements in the second half of the 1930s, Turkish concerns about its foreign and security policy concentrated more on Italy owing to the fact that Rome accelerated the phase of military

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Ali Suat Bilge, *Güç Komşuluk: Türkiye-Sovyetler Birliği ilişkileri, 1920-1964* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür yayınları, 1992), pp.113-119.

enforcements in the Dodecanese Islands with an aggressive rhetoric of foreign policy. As a result, Turkey adjusted its foreign and security policy vis-à-vis its neighbor not precluding the above-mentioned inter-European checks and balances.

Full-Path Foreign Policy, Inadequate Security:
Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Dodecanese until the completion of
The Montreux Convention

The previous chapter discussed a unique period during which the Turkish attention toward the Dodecanese focused more on the legal and diplomatic issues rather than the military ones. Although this chapter focuses more on the period beginning with 1934, namely the year in which the total militarization of the islands took place, the turn of the course of events dates back to 1932 for Italy and 1933 for Turkey. In this regard, before analyzing the events of 1934, it is necessary to touch upon some important developments that placed the military dynamics of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy in the forefront again.

One of such developments was the termination of the Grandi era that the previous chapter regarded as one of the reasons for the discursive softening in Italian diplomacy within the last years of the 1920s. After the dismissal of Grandi from the office in 1932, Mussolini took the foreign office into his own hands with the aim of bringing dynamism, which could be translated as the return of aggression, into Italian foreign policy.⁵⁹⁸ Although Mussolini tried to realize his ambitions firstly within the framework of Four Power Pact mentioned above, aiming at great power collaboration in dividing Europe into the spheres of influence, he chose to adapt a more irreconcilable

⁵⁹⁸ Burgwyn, p.71.

and individualistic attitude after he realized that his project of cooperation between Rome, Berlin, London, and Paris was actually a dead end.⁵⁹⁹ Indeed, the events after 1933 proved how the mentality of Mussolini regarding the administration of foreign relations differed from that of Grandi.

The reflection of the change of mentality in Italian foreign policy in the Aegean Sea in 1933 was twofold. Both influenced the Turkish security and diplomacy. The first reflection was the increasing undertakings which had been slowed down in the previous years. The documents display that another systematization process was handled specifically in Leros beginning in the second part of 1932. As seen in the Chapter Three, naval and air bases in Leros had already been constructed in the 1920s. In order to make these bases much more effective, the governor of the Dodecanese executed an accurate land relief between the naval and air installations and ordered the construction of principle artery on the island,⁶⁰⁰ which lacked an efficient system of roads in contrast to Rhodes.

In addition to the construction of roads and batteries in Leros, as the military center of the Dodecanese group, the number of soldiers transferred to this island increased. The concentration of troops in the island was so dense that the crowd in Leros led some specific problems in the island.⁶⁰¹ The Governor Lago constantly wrote letters to the capital emphasizing the overcrowding of soldiers and their families who lived in military barracks without any service of schooling or health, and of the civilian labors

⁵⁹⁹ Barlas and Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean*, p.152.

⁶⁰⁰ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Portolago*,” (Porto Laki), 4 July 1933.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

working in the construction processes.⁶⁰² Although the problems about the crowd specifically in terms of the construction of civil facilities on the island could not be solved in a short period of time due to the limitations about the budget,⁶⁰³ the governor and the military commanders of the area kept on appealing to Rome for the transfer of more soldiers.⁶⁰⁴ The demand for more troops continued in the following years despite the insufficient capacity of the island for the people.⁶⁰⁵

The acceleration of the military undertakings especially on Leros, brought the concerns of surveillance and espionage to the forefront, similar to the understanding of the 1920s. However, this time, the anxiety of the administration was not limited to the Turkish means. Instead, the area of the islands had become a point in which the other powers were also interested. For example, an intelligence report belonging to 1933 informed that a foreign airplane, which was supposedly German according to the Italian officials, had surveyed the naval and air base of Leros from approximately four hundred meters.⁶⁰⁶

In the middle of such incidents, the Dodecanese administration appealed to the interested institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of War for the implementation of anti-surveillance measures without creating danger to the regular traffic and tourism.⁶⁰⁷ Those measures were mainly the obligation of special

⁶⁰² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Porto Lago- Centro Urbano*," (Portolago, Urban Center), 18 April 1933.

⁶⁰³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Portolago*," (Porto Laki), 4 July 1933.

⁶⁰⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Appunto per Sua Eccellenza Il Capo di Gabinetto*," (Note for His Highness, the Head of Cabinet), 12 December 1933.

⁶⁰⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Comunicazioni*," (Communication), 29 December 1932.

⁶⁰⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 5, "*Passaggio Velivolo Straniero*," (Passage of the Stranger Airplanes), 20 April 1933.

⁶⁰⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Porto Lago, Base Militare*," (Porto Laki, Military Base), 28 September 1933.

authorizations for the ships entering into the bay of Porto Laki as well as the control of the civilian labors and the operators in Leros.⁶⁰⁸ These kinds of measures continued to intensify as the military importance of the island increased.

The second reflection of the changing style of Italian foreign policy in the Aegean was more direct than the abovementioned military undertakings. In 1933, the Italian authorities began to talk about a hydrographical project with the aim of bringing relief to the islands regarding navigational matters.⁶⁰⁹ However, since the geographical feature of the Aegean archipelago was complicated, the Italian authorities had to make some work in the territorial waters of Turkey and Greece in order to complete the project.⁶¹⁰

The Italians, although they had made the necessary applications to the Greek side and got the permissions, avoided appealing to the Turkish side since the military undertakings had already resulted in alarmist voices in Ankara, which might further suspect about the aims of the Italians about their hydrographical campaign.⁶¹¹ After the beginning of the project, news arrived both to Turkey and Greece about the landing of the Italian soldiers on the three islets in the Cyclades region, namely Kinaro, Levithi, and Maaronisi, which were regarded as dependent on Amorgos by the Greeks.⁶¹²

Neither Turkey nor Greece could understand the real aim of the Italians for some time in the sense of whether the landing was a hydrographical necessity or an act of

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Campagna Idrografica in Egeo*,” (Hydrographic Campaign in the Aegean), 31 January 1933.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Campagna Idrografica in Egeo*,” (Hydrographic Campaign in the Aegean), 31 March 1933 and 10 July 1933.

⁶¹² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Campagna Idrografica*,” (Hydrographical Campaign), 28 July 1933.

occupation.⁶¹³ The intent of the Italians in terms of occupation was confirmed when the sovereignty of the islands together with the other ones like Laro and Liadi was brought up for discussion. The sovereignty of these islets could not be solved in this time period, although the Greeks and the Italians established commissions for diplomatic negotiations for the issue similar to ones constituted for the Kastellorizo case. The second half of the 1930s became a scene of the unsuccessful efforts of the parties to formulate delimitation between the Dodecanese and the Cyclades group.

The significance of the event, however, stemmed from the fact that Italy had occupied the minor islands in the Aegean with the excuse of the hydrographical project. The authorities admitted openly in the official correspondence that those islets could not be left to Greece due to their proximity to Leros and to their geographical position that could be utilized as a barrier point militarily in case of war in the Levant.⁶¹⁴ In other words, Italy was militarily expanding the environment around the Dodecanese in preparation for a future war. Turkey thought that this future war in the Levant would be over Anatolia. The occupation of the Cyclades islets led the officials in Turkey to doubt the aims of Italy since those islets are much closer to Anatolia than to the Greek mainland, thus resulting in an interpretation of the incident as a preparation of aggression against Turkey.⁶¹⁵

Both these two reflections in the Aegean Sea led to the return of the Turkish anxiety into the political and military arena beginning with 1933. The undertakings

⁶¹³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Stampa Ellenica, Campagna Idrografica nel Dodecanneso*,” (Greek Press, Hydrographical Campaign in the Dodecanese), 5 August 1933.

⁶¹⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Isolotti di Levita, Mauro, Laro, Kinaro, Liadi*,” (Islets of Levita, Mauro, Laro, Kinaro, Liadi), 26 September 1933.

⁶¹⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Circoli Politici Locali*,” (Local Political Circles), 2 August 1933.

along the Aegean coast of Anatolia show that Turkey took the Dodecanese dynamic seriously in terms of military preparations since the beginning of the year. The visit of Turkish Prime Minister İsmet Paşa to the Antalya region in January 1933 was mentioned in the previous chapter, mainly in terms of his contacts with the locals in Kaş (Antifilio) about the commercial activities in the region with the Kastellorizo Island given the commercial problems existent between the two coasts.⁶¹⁶ However, this visit, which the President Mustafa Kemal also participated,⁶¹⁷ had not only domestic-political, but also security dimensions. They, together with Chief of the Turkish General Staff Fevzi Paşa, made several security arrangements in the area which was supposed to be under the threat of the islands.⁶¹⁸

One such arrangements was about the determination of a proposal concerning the transfer of the district governorate from Kaş to Üçağız (*Tristomo*) near Demre in consideration that the Kaş did not offer any refuge to ships while the Üçağız had a suitable natural port.⁶¹⁹ Although such a transfer did not seem to have occurred from the documents, it is remarkable that the interlocutor on those issues was the military authority, the highest ranking official of whom inspected the region due to the military importance of the area with respect to the islands. In addition to this transfer issue, the General Staff also made calculations about the appropriateness of the districts for the road construction that would connect the southern part of Antalya to Elmalı.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁶ For the commercial relations between the coasts, see Chapter 4.

⁶¹⁷ ASMAE Busta Dodecanneso 5, “*Visita Capo Governo e Presidente Repubblica Turca nella regione di Adalia*,” (The Visit of the Prime Minister and the President of the Turkish Republic to the Antalya Region), 6 February 1933.

⁶¹⁸ ASMAE Busta Turchia 7, “*Visita del Capo di Stato Maggiore Turco nella Regione di Finica*,” (Visit of the Chief of Turkish General Staff in the Finika Region), 24 January 1933.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

The road construction became a security-oriented matter in the southwestern Anatolia throughout the period. The above-mentioned visit of Fevzi Paşa was an important example of this situation because he was nearly the sole authority that both decided about the construction of the road between Kaş and Elmalı and inspected the workout for a specific period of time after which he ordered a modification specifically on the transition points of the mountains based on the necessities of the Turkish coastal defense.⁶²¹ The construction of these roads was important for logistics due to the fact that the roads in Anatolia were not suitable for automobiles, but for the carriages, horses, donkeys, and camels. Yet, their locations were important as much as their construction since the area was under threat of an occupation.

The place of attention was the triangular area between Finike, Kaş, and Elmalı from the Turkish strategic point of view in 1933 because troops were constantly being concentrated in Elmalı while some heavy artillery was positioned on the high grounds of Kaş, as well as on the roads from Finike to Elmalı.⁶²² The Chief of General Staff made a second visit to the same region during the autumn of the same year with four warships, *Yavuz*, *Barbaros*, *Turgut*, and *Hamidiye*.⁶²³ This high ranking visit along the coast of the Mediterranean was made after a new wave of claims had been made about a possible attack on southwestern Anatolia from the Dodecanese in the same month,⁶²⁴ fulfilling the action reaction chain in the relationship between the islands and the Turkish mainland.

⁶²¹ ASMAE Busta Turchia 7, “*Notizie Politiche-Militari sulla Turchia*,” (Political and Military Notes on Turkey), 9 March 1933.

⁶²² ASMAE Busta Turchia 7, “*Notizie sulla Turchia*,” (Notes on Turkey), 30 March 1933.

⁶²³ ASMAE Busta Turchia 7, “*Notizie sulla Turchia*,” (Notes on Turkey), 9 October 1933.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

The fortification of the islands together with some aggressive actions in the Aegean had led to an increase in the military preparations of Turkey. But, 1933 was rather a transitional year in the period of this chapter. The actual turning point for the change of dynamics in the Aegean Sea came with the beginning of 1934 after which Turkey's concerns about the Dodecanese began to reflect the military dynamics again, on the contrary of the understanding of the previous period. This turning point was closely related to one of the speeches that Mussolini made in the Italian Assembly:

I could give you the details of a plan up to 1945 but I prefer to point out to you the historic objectives towards which our generation and the generations to follow should be directed during the present century...The historic objectives of Italy have two names: Africa and Asia. South and the East are the cardinal points that should excite the interest and the will of Italians. There is little or nothing to do towards the North and the same towards the West, neither in Europe not beyond the Ocean. These two objectives of ours are justified by geography and history. Of all the large Western Powers of Europe, Italy is nearest to Africa and Asia. A few hours by sea and much less by air are enough to link up Italy with Africa and Asia.⁶²⁵

This speech was a typical reflection of the Fascist expansionism which perceived the task of acquiring specific territories as fundamental for the well-being of the nation,⁶²⁶ the regeneration of which was formulated on the basis of the *Mare Nostrum* ideology. Since Turkey always placed itself under the threat of this ideology because of its geographical situation in the Mediterranean, this speech of Mussolini became a real

⁶²⁵ Quoted by Güçlü, "Fascist Italy's Mare Nostrum Policy," p.816.

⁶²⁶ Aristotle A. Kallis, "To Expand or Not to Expand? Territory, Generic Fascism and the Quest for an 'Ideal Fatherland,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no.2 (April 2003), p.239.

blow to the relationship. The indignation that Mussolini's speech created in Turkish political circles can be seen easily from the journals close to the government.

For instance, the style of *Cumhuriyet*, which addressed directly Mussolini, tried to intimidate any aggressive action and stated that the Turks could discomfit not only one nation but also the whole world if the question was the defense of the country due to the integrity of the fatherland and the independence of the nation.⁶²⁷ Although Mussolini tried to soften the Turkish reaction by referring to the European character of Turkey as opposed to the African or Asian one as stated in his speech, the government devoted a specific session in the assembly in order to calm down the furious parliamentarians.⁶²⁸

Obviously, the reason behind the uselessness of the appeasement strategy that Rome implemented vis-à-vis the unmitigated Turkish reflex was the increasing activity on the Dodecanese Islands, which could not have a target other than the Anatolian lands, according to the Turkish officials. Actually, this idea did not just belong to Turkish political circles. Other countries were also making such claims based on the intelligence gathered from the islands.

For instance, the newspaper *Dimokratis* from Lesbos claimed that the situation in Leros was abnormal in a way that large quantities of war material together with soldiers were being transferred to the island the military authorities of which were openly

⁶²⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1934.

⁶²⁸ For the records of the session, see *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre: 4, Cilt: 21 İçtima Senesi: 2, 5 April 1934, p.15-17. For instance, Mahmud Esad (Bozkurt) specifically asked his question on the basis of the Dodecanese: “İdaresinde bulunan adaların memleketimizin yapışığı gibi olduğuna göre komşumuz olan İtalya Hükümetinin reisi tarafından söylenen nutkun bir çok Avrupa maybuatında hayli münakaşaya yol açtığını gördük. Bir kısım Türk matbuatı da hususi bir endişe gösterdiler. Beynelmilel sulh davası ve milli hassasiyet ve alaka noktasından Büyük Millet Meclisi önünde bu vaziyetin teşrihi لازم geldiği zaman dayım...”

discussing the landing on the overlooking coast of Anatolia.⁶²⁹ Whatever the reason behind such articles, especially those published in the Greek press was, the abnormal activity on the Italian islands seems to have occupied also the minds of the Greek politicians. War games held by the Greek navy in May 1934 in the waters of Samos, which was close both to Anatolia and to the Dodecanese group,⁶³⁰ designate well the security concerns of Athens in terms of the Aegean.

The Italian authorities acknowledged that the tense situation in the whole Aegean within the triangle of Greece, Turkey, and Italy was about their military activity in the Dodecanese. Italian archival materials emphasize that it was the question of the Dodecanese fortifications constituting one of the backbones of Turkish foreign and security policy.⁶³¹ Indeed, the words that the Turkish Prime Minister used during a colloquium with the Italian Ambassador in Ankara show the Turkish security concerns regarding the islands well: "I am daily informed about those preparations the end of which is not seen. When they are complete, we can judge their real scope. They will end soon? We do not know. Until then, we will live in doubt."⁶³²

Although the Turkish officials expressed their concerns related to the Dodecanese Islands in such an open way and the Turkish press showed the solution as the termination of the fortifications in the islands,⁶³³ the Italian authorities continued to

⁶²⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Stampa Ostile all'Italia*," (Hostile Press to Italy), 27 May 1934.

⁶³⁰ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, "*Concentramento di Truppi Italiane nel Dodecanneso*," (Concentration of the Italian Troops in the Dodecanese), 10 May 1934.

⁶³¹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Il Dodecanneso e le Relazioni Italo-Turche*," (*The Dodecanese and the Italian-Turkish Relations*), 16 December 1934.

⁶³² ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Relazioni Italo-Turche. Colloquio con Ismet Pascia*," (Italian Turkish Relations. Colloquium with Ismet Pasha), 26 May 1934.

⁶³³ One of them was *Akşam* which stated that if Italy valued Turkish friendship, they had one thing to do: De-armament of the islands. Quoted by ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Dall'Akcham*," (From Aksam), 17 December 1934.

make military transfers and fortifications while they complained rather about their failure in concealing preparations which were hidden in the mountains, yet easy to be identified.⁶³⁴ In the following years, the Italian command in the Dodecanese would sharpen the measures to hide the war preparations in different ways, accusing specifically any ships coming to the region and the consular networks in the islands, especially the Turkish ones.

The measures of Ankara, on the other hand, in response to the received intelligence were much more immediate. The military preparations that were accelerated specifically in Antalya in the previous year expanded to the whole western Anatolian coast, again. While the deployments specifically in the area of Finike and Elmalı in terms of the placement of heavy artillery persisted,⁶³⁵ another wave of military dispatch to the Dodecanese specifically around September 1934 resulted in an increase in military undertakings in the Aegean coasts of Turkey from Gulf of Edremit in the north, to the south of Muğla.⁶³⁶

One of the most important of those undertakings was the war games that took place in the same month on the Aegean coast of Turkey. For those war games, which were supposed to be both defensive and offensive, immense amount of military equipment as well as soldiers were transferred to the area in question.⁶³⁷ According to the Italian intelligence documents, which were able to cite even the numbers of the

⁶³⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 7, “*Informazioni sulle Isole dell’Egeo*,” (Information on the Aegean Islands), 18 June 1934.

⁶³⁵ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Informazioni d’Indole Militare*,” (Information of Military Character), 9 September 1934.

⁶³⁶ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Informazioni*,” (Information), 27 September 1934 and 22 September 1934.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

divisions and regiments and their locations,⁶³⁸ 150,000 soldiers were stationed from Antalya to İzmir in October 1934.⁶³⁹

One of the most acute difficulties that Turkish officials faced in military preparations was transportation facilities because the majority of the roads tying the coastal areas to the inner strategic cities were not appropriate for motor vehicles.⁶⁴⁰ Although some of the roads in the region were under construction in the 1930s as was the case of Elmalı-Kaş as stated above, the roads remained underdeveloped until the 1950s, as Tekeli and İlkin suggest that the military understanding of the time focused more on the railways.⁶⁴¹

Indeed, this argument can be confirmed by the fact that the most important aim for the military defense of the Turkish coasts was regarded as the completion of the railway between Afyon-Karahisar and Antalya, in the absence of other means.⁶⁴² These authors also claim that the overland roads in Anatolia could not be improved due to the economic difficulties based on the Great Depression.⁶⁴³ However, this work argues that other considerations also played role on the road construction in the early Republican era as much as the financial problems. In this sense, the defensive strategy related to the roads especially in terms of the coastal Turkey seems to be one of them that the military authorities had the priority in decision making process.

⁶³⁸ For an example of such document, see ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Informazioni*,” (Information), 1 September 1934.

⁶³⁹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Informazioni*,” (Information), 21 October 1934.

⁶⁴⁰ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Informazioni, Strade in Anatolia*,” (Information, the Roads in Anatolia), 29 August 1934.

⁶⁴¹ İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Cumhuriyet’in Harcı* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2004), p.379.

⁶⁴² ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Provvedimenti per la Difesa Nazionale in Turchia*,” (Measures for the Turkish National Defense), 18 May 1934.

⁶⁴³ İlkin and Tekeli, *Cumhuriyetin Harcı*, p.356.

In terms of strategy, the lack of roads could mean the transportation problems as was suggested above. Yet, it also meant difficulty for enemy forces in case of a landing or occupation. Therefore, the active involvement of the Chief of the Turkish General Staff in the road matters indicates that the authorities did not want to facilitate a possible attack with new roads, although they preferred better conditions for their logistics. Thus, in the conditions of 1934, the strategic roads between Bodrum, Marmaris, and Muğla were repaired to increase the defensive capacity of the region in case of a landing.⁶⁴⁴ Therefore, I argue that the issue of the roads especially in the western/southwestern Anatolia, either constructed or ruined, was closely related to the security policy of the government based on the threat perceived from the Dodecanese Islands. The above-mentioned case of Elmalı-Finike and the involvement of Fevzi Çakmak in the issue are meaningful examples in this sense.

Whatever the density of the strategic preparations in the coastal areas, the military security was not the only option for Turkey in this sub-period of the interwar era. Turkey was no longer an isolated country in European politics anymore, unlike in the first years of the Republic. In this respect, since the Mediterranean politics became truly complicated specifically in 1934, Turkey tried to forge its security in the area through diplomatic means. The diplomatic actions and initiatives of Turkey in order to constitute a peaceful environment around its border had begun long before 1934. Indeed, after the moment that Turkey solved its isolation problem in the international arena, it became a proactive country in the European diplomacy especially in terms of searching

⁶⁴⁴ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, “*Informazioni, Strade in Anatolia*,” (Information, the Roads in Anatolia), 29 August 1934.

alliances with the countries the stance of which reflected an anti-revisionist tendency, in the Balkans, in Europe, or even in the Middle East.⁶⁴⁵

The Balkan Entente is a good example of this approach of Turkish foreign policy. The Balkans was an area over which the French and the Italians were trying to dominate in order to which they attempted to establish rival alliance groups in the region.⁶⁴⁶ As was stated in the previous chapter, although Italy tried hard to bring Turkey and Greece closer especially in order to generate a Italian-Turkish-Greek front in the Balkans with revisionist tendencies in front of the pro-status quo French initiative Little Entente including Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia in the region, the “Greco-Turkish tie, once achieved, proved to be one of the strongest bulwarks of the status quo in the Balkans.”⁶⁴⁷

The visions of Greece and Turkey, which were experiencing the peak point in their relations, led to a series of conference among the Balkan states with the aims of the creation of a Balkan Union with the slogan “The Balkans for the Balkan people,” beginning in 1930. In the conferences that took place between 1930 and 1934, a wide range issues were discussed, including economic relations, communication, intellectual cooperation, political relations, hygiene, and social policy.⁶⁴⁸ Although Kerner and Howard argue with reason that the the Balkan integration idea was related to the impressions about the Locarno Agreement as well as the economic difficulties of the

⁶⁴⁵ Faruk Sönmezoğlu, *İki Savaş Sırası ve Arasında Türk Dış Politikası* (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2011), p.307.

⁶⁴⁶ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Twentieth Century*, vol.2 (New York: Cambridge, 1983), p.212.

⁶⁴⁷ Stavrianos, p.736.

⁶⁴⁸ For an excerpt to look at the Balkan Entente from the perspective of liberal internationalism, see Pavlos Hatzopoulos, *The Balkans: Beyond Nationalism and Identity* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), pp.97-125.

Great Depression,⁶⁴⁹ as the areas discussed in the conferences indicate, the main reason behind such an initiative was initially the danger of revisionism in the Balkans, especially the one of Italy,⁶⁵⁰ from the perspective of politics.

Since the division between the revisionist and anti-revisionist powers was as obvious in the Balkans as it was in Europe, the “Turkish diplomacy, thus, endeavored to enlist as many Balkan countries as possible into a Balkan entente,”⁶⁵¹ as Barlas and Güvenç write, thus, trying to keep the powers in a union with no territorial ambitions. Despite the efforts, however, Bulgaria and Albania, specifically under the influence of Italy which feared the loss of its Balkan incursion in case of a total participation,⁶⁵² did not take part in the union, unlike Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Romania, which formed the Entente in 1934.

The aim of the Entente was cooperation among the participatory states in the case of an aggressive action coming from a revisionist power in the Balkan region, obviously indicating Bulgaria, although it should be stated that the powers with the exception of Greece also signed other bilateral military accords that “provided for a commitment to help each other in the event of a Balkan attack, with or without the support of any external power,”⁶⁵³ obviously indicating Italy this time.

What were the implications of the Balkan Entente for the Aegean Sea? Although the significance of the pact for the Balkan region or in more general sense for the Mediterranean area has been much more discussed, the importance of the Pact for the

⁶⁴⁹ R. Joseph Kerner and Harry N. Howard, *The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente, 1930-1935: A Study in Recent History of the Balkan and Near Eastern Peoples* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1936), pp.21-23.

⁶⁵⁰ Barlas and Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean*, p.135.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., p.141.

⁶⁵² TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 030..10/226.523..30, 9 November 1932.

⁶⁵³ Barlas and Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean*, pp.146-146.

Aegean Sea takes generally a backseat in the works. The Entente and its relationship to the Aegean Sea should be analyzed based on the Bulgarian factor. As was stated, Bulgaria, within a close relationship with Italy, had revisionist tendencies. The major aim of Bulgarian foreign policy in the interwar years was the modification of the Neuilly Treaty since Sofia had territorial claims on Thrace, Macedonia, and Dobruja where Bulgarian minority resided.⁶⁵⁴ In terms of the Aegean, however, Bulgaria was insisting on an economic outlet to the archipelago, an idea dating back to the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 with the support of Russia.⁶⁵⁵ Sofia felt that it had been thrown out of the Aegean, despite the clauses of the Neuilly Treaty in terms of foreseeing an economic outlet for Bulgaria in the Aegean Sea.⁶⁵⁶

In the light of this stance of Bulgaria, the most important entailment of the pact for the Aegean was the strict separation of the parties in the form of Turkish-Greek alliance opposite to the Italian-Bulgarian one. The Italian and the Bulgarian alliance in this sense implied the constant Italian support to Sofia, in a louder way than before, regarding the former's desire of exit to the Archipelago. Although the Bulgarian outlet seemed an economic issue, it was closely related to the territorial claims on Thrace. Therefore, the idea behind the Italian protagonism about the Aegean outlet was obviously political, particularly intended to balance the Turkish-Greek existence in the north. In this respect, after the conclusion of the Balkan Entente without Bulgaria allied

⁶⁵⁴ For more information about the Bulgarian territorial claims, see Iv. Penacoff, "What Do the Bulgarians Want to-Day," in *Bulgaria and the Balkan Problems* ed. Bulgarian National Group for the Balkan Conferences (Sofia : Bulgarian National Group for the Balkan Conferences with the assistance of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1934), pp.34-39.

⁶⁵⁵ "Bulgaria and the Aegean," *Foreign Affairs* (October 1926), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68742/hamilton-fish-armstrong/bulgaria-and-the-aegean> (accessed December 17, 2014).

⁶⁵⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941* (Cambridge: University Press, 1946), p.355.

with Italy, Turkish security concerns for the Aegean gained a holistic approach in a way that Turkey began to fortify the Thracian border.⁶⁵⁷ All in all, the Balkan Entente, which could be regarded as one of the foreign policy initiatives through which Turkey tried to constitute its security in the region, also brought a distinct and final separation among the parties in the region. Thus, the situation in the surrounding environment of Turkey became much more complicated.

Despite the diplomatic efforts like the Balkan Entente together with the military measures in the coastal regions, Turkey's feeling of insecurity would continue in those complex dynamics. The major reason behind this security anxiety was the demilitarized status of the Straits under the conditions of the Lausanne Peace Treaty,⁶⁵⁸ because while the northwestern and southwestern Anatolia were fortified, the Straits had remained as an unfortified geography due to their legal statuses, damaging the Turkish security understanding. Therefore, the Straits became another target for the proactive foreign policy of Turkey in this period, closely related to the Dodecanese Islands.

Although the Turkish desire to change the Straits regime dated back to the first years of the 1930s, 1934 became a turning point in Turkish sensibility in this regard owing to the above-mentioned reasons. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs began diplomatic negotiations in Geneva and in other European capitals for the future of the

⁶⁵⁷ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Rapporti Italo-Turchi*," (Italian-Turkish Relations), 11 July 1934.

⁶⁵⁸ According to the Straits Convention of the Lausanne, the Straits were being regulated by a Straits commission. This convention provides relatively free transit regime and more importantly deprived the Turkey to rearm the area. For the full text of the Convention, see Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Convention Relating to the Régime of the Straits," http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ii_-convention-relating-to-the-regime-of-the-straits.en.mfa (accessed February 15, 2014).

Straits, just after the big speech that Mussolini had made in March 1934.⁶⁵⁹ Obviously, the visit of Kemal Atatürk to Çanakkale nearly at the same time of Aras' negotiations in Europe, about which the Greeks wrote the importance of the Dodecanese fortifications as well as Mussolini's speech as a reason,⁶⁶⁰ designates how the Turkish officials felt discomfort about the weakness of the Turkish security in the coastal zone. But it also should be added that although the the important point for the militarization of the Dardanelles was the Dodecanese fortifications, the Italian authorities occasionally claimed that the Turkish authorities were exploiting the military activity in the Dodecanese in order to reach its goal to change the status-quo in the Dardanelles.⁶⁶¹

Obviously, the international arena was not ready to support the Turkish cause by 1934, either. For example, Britain, which would back up Turkey about the Straits in future conditions, still insisted that a compromise among the all great powers and interested parties should be reached in order to change the regime of the Straits.⁶⁶² In other words, in 1934, Turkey could not justify its thesis among the Western powers. However, the statement of Tevfik Rüştü Aras, who declared that Turkey did not have to get any permission from any power and would defend the Straits in the same way that it would defend the other parts of its territory in case of a war,⁶⁶³ shows not only the resolution of Turkey in terms of implementing sovereignty in the Straits, but also the belief that the probability of war was not distant.

⁶⁵⁹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Questione degli Stretti*," (Question of the Straits), 9 May 1934.

⁶⁶⁰ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Stampa Ellenica: Questione di Dardanelli*," (Greek Press: the Question of the Dardanelles), 26 April 1934.

⁶⁶¹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Il Dodecanneso e le Relazioni Italo-Turche*," (The Dodecanese and the Italian-Turkish Relations), 12 November 1934.

⁶⁶² ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Questione degli Stretti*," (Question of the Straits), 9 May 1934.

⁶⁶³ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 11, "*Politica Estera Turca*," (Turkish Foreign Policy) 16 Haziran 1934.

The reason behind the British reluctance about the Straits was closely related to its foreign policy dynamics through which London tried not to bring Italy closer to Germany by giving decisions that could alienate Rome, because despite the Turkish disturbance about the Dodecanese fortifications, the Anglo-Italian relations remained in good terms until the Abyssinian Crisis.⁶⁶⁴ Therefore, Britain did not officially support Turkish foreign policy initiatives until 1935, which would bring differences into the Mediterranean balance of power.

This historical fact can also be seen in the project of the Mediterranean Pact in which Turkey participated 1934. The French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou, formulated this pact initially in order to enhance peace and cooperation among the Mediterranean powers, and Turkey, which desired the Bulgarian, Italian, British, Yugoslavian, Greek, Spanish, and French participation, had ardently supported the project since it could hinder any revisionist naval action in the region.⁶⁶⁵ But, both Italy that had revisionist agenda in itself and Britain due to the abovementioned consideration, announced their abstention from such a formation during 1934.⁶⁶⁶ In short, while Turkey was searching diplomatic ways to protect its territories against the military fortress of Dodecanese in addition to the military preparations, Britain had not become a supportive power for Turkey by 1934.

This position of Britain vis-à-vis Italy and Turkey did not last long. The turning point came after Italy decided to occupy Abyssinia. Abyssinia had become a haunting

⁶⁶⁴ Massimiliano Fiore, *Anglo-Italian Relations in the Middle East, 1922-1940* (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2010), p.5.

⁶⁶⁵ Dilek Barlas, "Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Opportunities and Limits for Middle-Power Activism in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no.3 (2005), pp.451-52.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid. p.452.

idea for Italy beginning with 1932 and had turned into an acute one especially in 1934. After 1934, Italian foreign policy directed majority of its initiatives and alliances based on the Abyssinian goal, which had become an honour issue for the Italians due to the great defeat of Adowa in 1896.⁶⁶⁷ Since the relations with Germany, which could be the most suitable candidate in terms of supporting a revisionist act, was in tension due to the constant Italian concern for *Anschluss* against which Rome had mobilized troops in the Austrian border of Alps in the middle of 1934, after the attempted Nazi coup in Austria and the assassination of Chancellor Dolfuss;⁶⁶⁸ an alliance with Berlin was not an option. Therefore, Italy had to come closer with Britain and France in order to provide support for its future venture in Abyssinia. It is surprising to see that the relationship with the latter reflected a much easier condition if the continuous rivalry between Paris and Rome both in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean is kept in mind. Since France needed a European alliance in terms of constituting a balance against the German threat, French and Italian communications led to Mussolini-Laval Accords in January 1935, through which the French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval gave Mussolini a free hand to invade Abyssinia, in return for a support against Berlin.⁶⁶⁹

Britain turned a blind eye to the Mussolini-Laval agreements at first due to the acceleration of the German threat to the European arena, like the German reincorporation of Saar in March 1935, and the reintroduction of the military service in violation of the Versailles Treaty, in the same month. Britain, France, and Italy even formulated the Stresa Front together in order to underline the validity of the Locarno

⁶⁶⁷ Mallett, *Mussolini and the Origins of the Second World War*, p.19.

⁶⁶⁸ Andrew Crozier, *The Causes of the Second World War* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 1997), p.104.

⁶⁶⁹ Strang, p.809.

settlements and the independence of Austria in April 1935.⁶⁷⁰ However, the British ignorance of Italian imperial dreams in the first half of 1935 turned into full anxiety in the coming months, leading to serious tension between these two powers in the Mediterranean.

Italian attacks on Abyssinia began in the first half of 1935 in the border zones, yet in a limited scope, just after Abyssinian government had made applications to the League of Nations against the Italian aggression. But the violent declarations of Mussolini about the bilateral character of the situation rather than a collective one under the framework of the League,⁶⁷¹ exposed the fact the Abyssinia was a military case for Italy rather than a diplomatic one. It was after this manifestation that Britain became ardently against any action in Abyssinia because such a victory would have the power to disrupt the balance of power in the Mediterranean which was “a main arterial road... a vital interest in the full sense of the word to the British Commonwealth of Nations.”⁶⁷² In this respect, Britain and Italy came on the brink of a war in the Mediterranean in the second half of 1935 during which the Italo-Ethiopian tension metamorphosed into an international crisis.⁶⁷³

Mallett argues that Mussolini ventured a war against the Royal Navy although the Italian naval forces were neither sufficient nor prepared for such a difficult task.⁶⁷⁴ Obviously, planning sea warfare against the British was not the only initiative that Rome undertook. Instead, beginning with the Ethiopian crisis, Italy used an anti-British

⁶⁷⁰ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs* (London:H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1936), v.1935, part.1, pp.159-161.

⁶⁷¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 20 May 1935.

⁶⁷² Elizabeth Monroe, *Mediterranean in Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.11.

⁶⁷³ Mallett, *Mussolini and The Origins of the Second World War*, p.40.

⁶⁷⁴ Mallett, “The Italian Naval High Command and the Mediterranean Crisis,” pp.80–90.

propaganda campaign in the Arabian Peninsula, specifically in Egypt, in order to stir up the Arab population with the hope of keeping the British troops occupied with the security issues, thus preventing them from getting involved in the Italian affairs in the Mediterranean and Africa.⁶⁷⁵ From the British side, it is seen that the number of the British warships in the Mediterranean increased and London began to pay much more attention to its strategic bases in this sea like the ones in Malta. Although a warlike situation in the Mediterranean Sea arose out of the Italian insistence on an African colony, the much expected clash between the British and Italian navies did not take place in the Mediterranean when Italy attacked to Addis Ababa in October 1935.

Apart from the further clarification of camps among the European powers as in the case of the German-Italian rapprochement within framework of the Abyssinian crisis, one of the most outstanding results of the tension in the Mediterranean, especially for the topic of this dissertation, was the rising cooperation between Turkey and Britain. As could be guessed, in the conditions of 1935, the strategic position of Turkey in the Mediterranean as well as in the Aegean specifically in terms of the Dodecanese played a major role in this cooperation.

As was explained above, Turkey had already begun its diplomatic initiatives for its security vis-à-vis the Dodecanese Islands. Ankara had accelerated its efforts during 1935 as a result of the intensification of the military undertakings on the islands. Turkish government confidentially called the attention of various countries in Europe on those preparations that could pose danger to the whole Mediterranean.⁶⁷⁶ But, for the return of

⁶⁷⁵ Fiore, pp.36-37.

⁶⁷⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, "*Dodecanneso*," (Dodecanese), 14 March 1935.

its calls, Ankara would have to wait for the aforementioned British-Italian tension in the sea.

Meanwhile, Turkey intensified its military works further in the southern region due to the belief of the Turkish political and military circles in a possible Italian assault to the coasts facing the islands, despite the contrariwise explanations of the Italian officials that defined their military works in the Aegean as precautionary, specifically for their African interests rather than the Anatolian coast.⁶⁷⁷ The Italian officials even claimed that the Turks were exaggerating the Italian danger either to instigate nationalism in Turkey or to gain a diplomatic victory in the Straits.⁶⁷⁸ However, contrary to the Italian claims, the Turkish discomfort about the islands was not just in the discursive level aimed at diplomatic gains, as could be seen in the huge military undertakings of Ankara in the region at issue. Turkey militarized some of its villages through the evacuation of the civilian population near Antalya and Muğla in order to make those villages either fortified or place of ammunition,⁶⁷⁹ against a possible attack.

Likewise, it was stated that Ankara's aim was to mobilize 150-200,000 men from Antalya to İzmir, and the officials were making the military undertakings and road constructions for transportation accordingly.⁶⁸⁰ The high-ranking officials including the Chief of General Staff himself usually inspected the progress of these preparations. In addition, the voyage of the President Atatürk for the inspection purposes in the zone

⁶⁷⁷ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, "*Rapporti Italo-Turchi*," (Italian-Turkish Relations), 16 March 1935.

⁶⁷⁸ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, "*Rapporti Italo-Turchi*," (Italian-Turkish Relations), 15 January 1935, "*Armamenti nel Dodecanneso*," (Armaments in the Dodecanese), 10 October 1935.

⁶⁷⁹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, "*Informazioni*" (Information), 3 March 1935, "*Informazioni*" (Information) 24 January 1935.

⁶⁸⁰ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, "*Informazioni*" (Information), 15 February 1935.

facing the Dodecanese, from Çeşme to Mersin with Fethiye, Marmaris, Antalya as points of stop, designates well to what extent the issue was handled with care.⁶⁸¹

At this point, it should also be stated that Turkish security in the Aegean became much more complicated in 1935 due to Bulgaria and Greece. In terms of the former, Bulgarian militarization had led Turkey to pay attention to the Thracian border, as well. As was stated above, after 1934, Turkish security understanding in the West widened as encompassing both the northern and the southern borders. When the Italian fortifications in the Aegean increased in 1935, Turkish security measures accelerated also in the northern part of Turkey, because of the Turkish fear assuming that Italy and Bulgaria would cooperate in a war in the Aegean.⁶⁸² In this context, northwestern and southwestern defensive measures cannot be analyzed as separate issues.

In terms of Greece, on the other hand, Turkey had to take some measures not because of the aggressive behavior of Athens, but because of the internal problems that the country faced with in 1935. In March, the Venizelists, who were against the royal tendencies of the existing government, tried to make a coup in Greece. Although this attempt ended with a failure in a short span of time for the Venizelists, who fled from the country thereafter, including Venizelos himself; it became sufficient for further complicating the situation in the Aegean, because of the naval traffic specifically around the islands,⁶⁸³ both during and after the revolt.

In this period, while Italy sent more battleships to the Dodecanese and suspended the postal services among Rhodes, Greece, and Turkey, Turkey also sent its battleships

⁶⁸¹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, “*Viaggio Marittimo del Presidente della Repubblica*,” (Maritime Voyage of Republic’s President), 12 March 1935.

⁶⁸² ASMAE, Turchia 15, “*Informazioni*,” (Information), 27 February 1935, “*Informazioni Militari*,” (Military Information), 2 March 1935.

⁶⁸³ *The Times*, 9 March 1935.

to the Aegean Sea specifically because of the chaos that Greek ships around the islands constituted.⁶⁸⁴ It seems that not only the Greek ships, but also the patrolling measures of Italy and Turkey in the Aegean, resulted in a chaotic environment in the Archipelago to an extent that for instance Italian officials even sent a note to Turkey against the violation of the Dodecanesian territorial waters several times during this time frame.⁶⁸⁵ In any case, the first half of the 1935, the Archipelago meant threat, danger, insecurity and chaos for Turkey.

The British involvement in the Mediterranean, in the second half of the year due to the Abyssinian issue as explained above, strengthened the position of Turkey also in terms of military apart from the diplomatic gains that Turkey would receive. The Italian intelligence network began to follow both the British and the Turkish naval powers together, because they were navigating near the Dodecanese Islands.⁶⁸⁶ Actually, the existence of the British in the Aegean against the Italians had changed the balance of power in the Archipelago, in the way of favoring the Turkish position.

For this reason, after the second half of the 1935, Italian military reports were intensified about the increased military movements and undertakings in Turkey. The Italian authorities who followed the Turkish measures with concern described them as “extraordinary.” The Turkish actions were based on the similar dynamics yet on a greater scale, like the transfer of soldiers, artillery, construction work, telegraphic work, and the war games that took place in the Aegean.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, “*Navi da Guerra Turche in Acque Territoriali Dodecanesina*,” (Turkish Warships in the Territorial Waters of the Dodecanese), 15 April 1935, 9 May 1935.

⁶⁸⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, “*Movimenti della Flotta Britannica e Attività Militare Turca di Fronte alle Isole del Egeo*,” (Movements of the British Fleet and Turkish Military Activity in front of the Aegean Island), 16 October 1935.

Actually, those intensified measures of Turkey were directly related to the extraordinary Italian military activity in the Dodecanese Islands, which increased day by day. Obviously, even the Italian authorities of the Dodecanese were aware of the fact that the frequency of military transfers was causing anxiety on the facing coast. The governor Lago himself had adopted a novel way in terms of giving laconic news in the local newspapers, which were under a strict censure; in order to show those military undertakings were not secret and extraordinary, but normal.⁶⁸⁷

However, the conditions around the islands were not normal as the Italians tried to claim, because apart from the above-mentioned military preparations including the mining of waters around the islands,⁶⁸⁸ the total militarization of the Dodecanese in terms of their administration was on the agenda.⁶⁸⁹ According to an Italian decree of 1919, in the time of total mobilization, defense, and resistance; civil, military, and administrative rights could be transferred to the military/naval authorities.⁶⁹⁰ In the second half of 1935, the responsible authorities hotly debated whether this decree could be applied or not to the Dodecanese that Italy had legally defined as “possession.” It was Governor Lago who rejected the military administration idea, reminding the international repercussions that such an administration could bring.⁶⁹¹ According to Lago, if this was inevitable, at least it must have been applied only to Leros and

⁶⁸⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, “*Truppe nel Dodecanneso*,” (Troops in the Dodecanese), 8 September 1935.

⁶⁸⁸ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0 /238.606..16. 16 September 1935.

⁶⁸⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, “*Piazzeforti Marittime Italiane nell’Egeo*,” (Maritime Strongholds of Italy in the Aegean), 6 October 1935.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

Stampalia.⁶⁹² This would take place during the Abyssinian War specifically for the former island.

When those measures of its neighbor are kept in mind, Turkey's undertakings and declarations about the Dodecanese were neither surprising nor extraordinary. In one such declaration, the Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras stated that they spent ten million Turkish Lira on heavy artillery and aviation, specifically for the potential danger from the Dodecanese.⁶⁹³ Although the Italian authorities answered Aras with a possibility of examination of the Dodecanesian armament after the Abyssinian crisis,⁶⁹⁴ the situation in the last month of 1935 was far from such a de-armament discussion.

It was interesting that as Turkey felt uncomfortable about the Dodecanese; the Dodecanese did so feel about the Anatolian coast in that period. Indeed, one of the most fearful scenarios of Rome during the Abyssinian crisis was the capture of the Dodecanese by the British naval forces, thus leading to the loss of the most important military base of Italy in the eastern Mediterranean and cutting the links with Suez Canal.⁶⁹⁵ If the changing balance of power in the Aegean after the British involvement is added to the extraordinary military preparations of Turkey in the Aegean coasts followed by Italy with anxiety, it would not be surprising to see that the Italian officials began to question whether those undertakings were offensive or defensive.

⁶⁹² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, “*Shema di R. Decreto per Concessione dei Pieni Poteri ai Commandanti delle Piazza Forti Marittime e Zone Marittime*,” (Scheme of the Royal Decree for the Concession of Full Powers of Maritime Strongholds and Zones to the Marine Command), 26 October 1935.

⁶⁹³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 11, “*Armamenti nel Dodecanneso*,” (Armaments in the Dodecanese), 10 October 1935.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ Mallett, “Italian Naval High Command,” p.90.

The military reports show that with the placement of the special artillery across from Leros, the officials in the Dodecanese began to make some calculations about the distance between the coasts and concluded that the bay of Porto Laki was technically within the range of Turkish artillery.⁶⁹⁶ Although the strategic evaluations varied from the improbability of such an act of aggression,⁶⁹⁷ to the probability of action only in case of a general European conflict;⁶⁹⁸ the Italians particularly asked the Turkish General Staff about the long-ranged missiles against Leros during the Abyssinian War, probably because of their vulnerability to an attack while dealing with another region.⁶⁹⁹ Even if Turkey answered stating that those preparations were not offensive but defensive based on the existing political-military situation in the region,⁷⁰⁰ the probability of a Turkish move on Leros was debated for a while.

The intensification of such debates coincides with the first half of 1936. It was suggested above that with the Abyssinian crisis, Turkish-British rapprochement took place in the Mediterranean. The first diplomatic product of this rapprochement was the formal guarantees that Britain, France, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey gave each other, in January 1936. These assurances, which were known as the Mediterranean Accords, envisaged the help of Britain to those states, which were under the threat of Italy in the Mediterranean.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 11, “*Lero*,” (Leros), 9 August 1935.

⁶⁹⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, “*Armamenti a Rodi e Turchia*,” (Armaments in Rhodes and Turkey) 17 August 1935.

⁶⁹⁸ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 9, “*Progetti Operativi Turchi*,” (Turkish Operation Projects), 13 August 1935.

⁶⁹⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 11, “*Dodecanneso- Armamento*,” (Dodecanese, Armaments), 2 November 1935.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Soysal, pp.489–492.

Although the assurances of London was neither an inclusive Mediterranean Pact, which had not been supported by the British in 1935, nor an alliance treaty as Ankara would desire in the following months without any successful result; it started a new phase in Turkish foreign policy as well as Turkish stance in the Aegean. The British and Turkish military and strategic cooperation grew specifically for Turkey's Aegean coasts, which preoccupied Italy further. Indeed, throughout 1936, British officers came to Turkey occasionally and visited the coasts in order to inspect the Turkish security measures. For example, while the British aviation officers reviewed the Turkish aviation facilities in İzmir,⁷⁰² which was the center of the Turkish airforce, the naval officers came to Turkey to study the operational capacity of the ports in the coastal zones of Anatolia, such as the ones of İzmir and Fethiye.⁷⁰³ According to the Italian officials, Britain was trying to encircle the Dodecanese Islands in the Mediterranean by founding bases within the triangular of İzmir, Cyprus, and one of the islands of Greece from the Sporades group.⁷⁰⁴

The Italian officials also thought that within cooperation with Britain, Turkey could make an aggressive act against the islands.⁷⁰⁵ A correspondence between the Italian officials even pointed out that Britain had already given a free hand to Turkey about the islands in case of a general clash in the Mediterranean.⁷⁰⁶ Actually, the probability of a Turkish act against the Dodecanese was not only an Italian assumption;

⁷⁰² ASMAE, Busta Turchia 18, "*Le Conversazioni di Londra, e Parigi, e la Turchia*," (The Conversations of Londra, Paris and Turkey), 11 February 1936.

⁷⁰³ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 18, "*Ufficiali Britannici in Turchia*," (British Officials in Turkey), 12 February 1936.

⁷⁰⁴ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 18, "*Informazioni Militari sulla Zona di Smirne*," (Military Information on the Zone of İzmir), 25 February 1936.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 18, "*Turchia e Inghilterra*," (Turkey and England), 29 May 1936.

the international community was also talking about such a venture. For instance, an article published in *The New York Times* in March 1936 stated that Turkey would invade the Aegean Islands of Italy in case of an Italian defeat in the Abyssinian War.⁷⁰⁷

According to the article, this invasion was so probable that even a debate between Greek and Turkish newspapers had begun about whether the islands were Greek or Turkish.⁷⁰⁸

In short, the expectations about the Aegean Sea in the first half of 1936 foresaw a Turkish action against the Dodecanese under the umbrella of British support, as being remarkably different from the general understanding about the Archipelago throughout the interwar period.

Increasing Turkish activity in the coastal regions seemed to trigger the suspicions of Italy. The militarization of the Anatolian coasts had always been a direct reflection of the rising military activity in the islands, which was regarded as the preparations for an Italian landing in Anatolia. However, although Italy had attacked Abyssinia in October 1935, rather than Anatolia, the undertakings along coastal Turkey had not come to an end. On the contrary, the preparations accelerated. Thus, Italy as well as other European powers considered those preparations, now supported by Britain, was the harbinger of a Turkish assault to the islands.

But, this dissertation argues that the Turkish mind concerning the islands was still defensive in 1936, because the main reason behind the major undertakings was the Turkish belief that the troops in the Dodecanese would land in Anatolia after Abyssinia.⁷⁰⁹ In other words, Turkey relieved only partially after the Italian attack to

⁷⁰⁷ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/238.607..16, 3 March 1936.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 19, “*Rapporti Italo-Turchi. La Turchia e le Sanzioni*,” (Italian-Turkish Relations. Turkey and the Sanctions), 27 November 1935.

Abyssinia since it considered the Italian imperial understanding as unstoppable in the Mediterranean with the existence of the necessary means, like the islands.

By the time the war between Italy and Abyssinia came to an end in May 1936 with the barely achieved victory of the former, Turkey had strengthened the majority of its coastal zone in Anatolia and come closer to Britain in its foreign policy through the strategic cooperation in the Aegean as well as through the guarantees that Britain gave to Turkey in the Mediterranean. This British-Turkish rapprochement would give its most significant yield in 1936; the Montreux Convention.

As was suggested above, since the Turkish officials knew well that the demilitarized status of the Straits under the administration of an international commission was one of the most important breaches in the security of Turkey, the diplomatic efforts of Ankara to change the Straits regime had begun long before 1935, but neither the international arena nor the British stance had permitted such an alteration. However, the clash of British and Italian interests before and during the Abyssinian War paved the way for a new Straits regime, which can be defined as one of the biggest achievements of Turkish foreign policy in the Republican history.

The disappointment of Turkey about the Straits initiative taken in 1934 transformed into a hope in the conditions of 1935, due to the ongoing tension both in the Aegean and in the Mediterranean. In these conditions, Turkey carried its Straits agenda to the fore one more time. Britain, which had stood away such an idea nearly a year ago, began to support the Turkish cause during the Abyssinian crisis because its great power interests were at stake in the Mediterranean. It can be argued that the attack of Italy to Abyssinia together with the constant militarization of the Dodecanese, while led to a

frustration in Turkey in terms of a possible attack, served the Turkish interests at the same time.

The militarization of the Straits was discussed throughout 1935 and 1936. In the meantime, Turkish officials made efforts for the Straits not only in the diplomatic sphere, but also in the military one in a way that unusual activity took place in the Balıkesir and Çanakkale regions where Turkey had accumulated arms and munitions.⁷¹⁰ Based on the related intelligence reports which were supposedly confirmed also by Britain, the Italian officials claimed that Turkey was implementing strict counter-surveillance measures in the demilitarized zone of the Dardanelles, and therefore might attempt to modify the situation in the Straits unilaterally as a result of this favorable international situation.⁷¹¹ As opposed to the Italian interpretations, Turkey did not intend to change the status of the Straits arbitrarily; instead it favored a diplomatic solution. But, as the intelligence reports stated, Turkish military undertakings were intensified in the places near the Dardanelles throughout 1935, probably in order to show the Turkish determination in the matter.

When the resolution of Turkey in terms of changing the demilitarized status of the Straits and the moderation of the British stance gave the signals of an alteration in the regime of the Straits, a new debate between Turkey and Greece erupted over the demilitarized status of the Greek islands in northern Aegean group. Since the issue endured until recent day in the Aegean, it is necessary to touch upon how it began even if this discussion was perpetuated through the press.

⁷¹⁰ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, “*Regime degli Stretti*,” (The Regime of the Straits), 24 July 1935.

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

In July 1935, during which the Straits conversations were being made publicly, *Estia*, one of the most influential Greek newspapers, sparked off an important public debate. According to the newspaper, in case of the Turkish militarization of the Straits, Greece could not remain indifferent because if Turkey retained its right to militarize the Dardanelles, so did Greece regarding Lemnos, Samothrace, Chios, Lesbos, and Samos.⁷¹² The reason behind such necessity was that if the fortification of the Dardanelles would constitute the security of Turkey, it would represent a threat to the islands in the region.⁷¹³

Cumhuriyet, one of the newspapers closest to the government in Turkey, gave the Turkish answer to the article, in an eminently direct and stiff manner. According to *Cumhuriyet*, Turkey had the desire to fortify the Dardanelles because the region was directly related to the territorial security of the whole Turkey while the same security clause could not be applied to Greece since the Greek islands were not close to the Greek mainland.⁷¹⁴ If Greece militarized those islands not in the littoral of Greece while those closer to the mainland remained demilitarized like Cyclades, Crete, Kefalonia; Turkey would regard this action as both illogical and directly against the Anatolian mainland.⁷¹⁵

After the Turkish intimidation about the consideration of such an act directly against Turkey in case of occurrence, *Estia* gave a conciliatory answer to its Turkish counterpart. It stated that if Greece would militarize its islands after the fortification of the Dardanelles, the reason behind this manifestation would not to attack Turkey, but to

⁷¹² ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, “*La Grecia ed il Regime degli Stretti*,” (Greece and the Regime of the Straits), 1 July 1935.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

protect region together against the enemy.⁷¹⁶ Compared with the first article, this second explanation of the newspaper was a direct reversal probably for the sake of the Turkish-Greek relations. In other words, during the time that was regarded as the peak of the sincere friendship between Ankara and Athens, the subject was dropped. However, specifically after the 1950s, in which the Aegean relations began to be strained, Greece turned to the above-mentioned idea of *Estia* formally, claiming that since the Straits part of the Lausanne Treaty became ineffective with the Montreux Convention, so did the demilitarized status of the islands specifically close to the Dardanelles, like Samothrace.⁷¹⁷

Despite the disputes about the change in the Straits regime as could be seen in the Turkish-Greek one, the general European framework, specifically Britain and the Soviet Union was supporting the Turkish desire to change the Straits regime.⁷¹⁸ Turkey utilized this favorable framework and delivered a note on the necessity of change in the Straits regime in April 1936, to the concerned states. All of the parties answered the note of Turkey positively, with the exception of Italy, which declared that it had been exposed to an injustice about the sanctions after its attack to Abyssinia and would

⁷¹⁶ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 15, “*Regime degli Stretti*,” (The Regime of the Straits), 10 July 1935.

⁷¹⁷ It should be emphasized that whether the islands in the northern Aegean group can be militarized or not still continues to be an important dispute between Turkey and Greece. For more information about the historical development of the debate together with the current status see: Heraclides.

⁷¹⁸ It is important to note that in 1936, while Italy was trying to change the status quo in the Eastern Mediterranean, Nazi Germany militarized the Rhineland breaking the Versailles Treaty one step further. Another concern of Britain was the Soviet Union which could make an alliance with Italy in the Mediterranean according to the British official circles. Although this assumption reflects an exaggeration, it became one of the reasons that Britain supported the Turkish sovereignty in the Straits. Soviet Union, on the other hand, while supporting the Turkish desire to militarize the Straits as the traditional interwar ally of Turkey, had a different agenda for the transit regime.

participate in an international conference about the Straits only if those sanctions were lifted.⁷¹⁹

After the parties gathered for a conference without Italy and after a though negotiation process among the various states, the Montreux Convention was signed on 20 July 1936. With this new regime, Turkey gained the right to remilitarize the region in the direction of its will, to control passages through the Straits, and to become the only administrative authority of these waterways owing to the abolition of the international Straits Commission.⁷²⁰ With such clauses that meant almost complete Turkish sovereignty on the Straits, the Montreux Convention could be interpreted as one of the most successful diplomatic initiatives of Turkish foreign policy.

The conclusion of such a treaty was the direct result of the combination that Turkey put forward the Dodecanese fortifications extremely close to its territory leading to a strategic vulnerability as the main factor of desire to change the system with the rising tension in the Mediterranean during the Abyssinian crisis in which the Aegean bases of Italy played an influential role. However, although the core dynamic seems to have come out of a narrow area specifically related to the militarization issue, the impacts of the convention were quite extensive. First of all, one of the most important consequences of the convention especially for the topic of this dissertation became the

⁷¹⁹Those sanctions had been introduced under the framework of the League of Nations. T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, Araştırma ve Siyaset Planlama Genel Müdürlüğü, *Montreux ve Savaş Öncesi Yılları, 1935-1939*, vol.4 of *Türk Dış Politikasında 50 Yıl* (Ankara: Genel Müdürlük, 1973), p.53.

⁷²⁰ Montreux Convention, which is still valid in governing the Straits reflects military dynamics of the period in which it was actualized. For more information about the character of the treaty see Hazal Papuccular, “Boğazlar Rejimi: Askeri Güvenlik Söyleminden Çevresel Güvenlik Sorunsalına” in *Türk Dış Politikasında Sorunlar ve Uluslararası Hukuk*, ed. by Cenap Çakmak, Nejat Doğan, Ahmet Öztürk (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2012), pp.79-101, and for the full text of treaty see: “Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi,”http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Montro_TR.pdf (accessed May 16, 2014).

removal of a strategic vulnerability of Anatolia owing to the fact that right after the signatures Turkey began to militarize the Dardanelles. In this way, the Western coasts from the south to the north were fortified.

Second, the Montreux Convention resulted in a change in Turkish foreign policy regarding Turco-Soviet relations. Throughout the conference, the Soviets had supported a free transit of the Black Sea navies from the Straits in the times of war together with a Turkish-Soviet mutual defense system in the region, but the result became individual Turkish sovereignty, which was a turning point in terms of the deterioration of the relations between Ankara and Moscow.⁷²¹ Last but not least, with the sovereignty of Turkey over the passage regime especially in the times of war made the Turkish government's decisions much more valuable since those waterways had always been geo-strategically important.

As could be seen, Turkey, which entered into a frightening epoch specifically after 1934 due to the developments in the Aegean, seems to gain strength throughout these two years until 1936. During this time frame, while Turkey kept on fortifying its coasts against an attack from the islands, it also dealt with the Dodecanese dynamic in the sphere of diplomacy. Apart from Turkey's ongoing diplomatic initiatives in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean in terms of constituting alliances, this dissertation argues that the militarization in the Dodecanese Islands played an important role in Turkish-British rapprochement in 1935 due to the Abyssinian War, and relatedly in the change of the Straits regime with the Montreux Convention. These two phenomena would play important roles in the future of the Turkish diplomacy and security.

⁷²¹ Sönmezoğlu, pp.340-341.

After 1936: Sprinting towards a Full-Scale War

The war in Abyssinia ended with a troublesome victory of Italy and the tension in the Mediterranean decreased. In the meantime, however, the Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy had got closer. Although Britain gave assurances to the southeastern European states under the threat of Italy during the war within the structure of the Mediterranean Accords, and helped Turkey to change the Straits regime; in the second half of 1936, Britain tried to get closer with Italy again, to break Rome off from Berlin suitably with its above-mentioned palliative foreign policy approach. The lifting of the sanctions, the dissolution of the Mediterranean Accords during 1936, and the Gentleman's Agreement through which Italy and Britain promised to respect the status-quo in the Mediterranean were the means that London used for its goal.⁷²²

The reflection of this détente on Turkish foreign policy was the British effort to ease the tension between Rome and Ankara in terms of a mutual understanding through which the former would sign the Montreux Convention while the latter would recognize the Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia.⁷²³ However, despite the British efforts, neither Italy broke off from Germany nor did the relationship between Greece, Turkey, Britain, and Italy soften in the Mediterranean, although the Abyssinian crisis was over.

One of the most important dynamics behind the failure of the British efforts to come closer with Italy was the Spanish Civil War. At a time that the chaos in the

⁷²² Burgwyn, p.150.

⁷²³ Italy had declared that as long as Turkey did not accept the Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia, it would not recognize the Montreux Convention. It should be stated that Turkey would accept this precondition in 1938 in which Italy recognized the Montreux in return. For more information about the issue see: Süleyman Seydi, *The Turkish Straits and the Great Powers: From the Montreux Convention to the Early Cold War, 1936-1947* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2003), pp.56-65.

Mediterranean and Aegean was expected to decrease due to the end of the war, Spanish Civil War resulted in the prolongation of this atmosphere. After the war broke out between General Franco's Nationalist groups and the Spanish government's Republican forces in July 1936, Italy decided to interfere in the war on behalf of the nationalists.⁷²⁴

As was suggested in the first part of this chapter, the Spanish Civil War was a rehearsal for the Second World War because it was the first showdown of the Axis, which was encountered by the forces of the Soviet Union together with the volunteers from other countries. The issue that concerned Turkey during the Spanish Civil War was not ideological, as it was for Fascism, Nazism, or Communism. Rather, it was directly related to the piracy events in the Mediterranean Sea in which the airplane and torpedo attacks had begun after the outbreak of the civil war.⁷²⁵ What was alarming for Turkey was that those torpedo attacks were also taking place in the Aegean Sea, even in the Straits.⁷²⁶ Therefore, this chaotic environment specifically in the Archipelago became one of the major reasons why the tension in the region persisted.

How did those piracy events in the Aegean Sea influence the Turkish foreign policy? It should be stated that Britain, which pursued an "appeasement policy" in European affairs specifically towards Italy, had been constrained to summon an international conference with France when the piracy events that-supposedly-Italian submarines were actualizing targeted both military and mercantile ships in the

⁷²⁴ John F. Coverdale, *Italian Intervention in Spanish Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p.13.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Yücel Güçlü, "Turco-British Rapprochement on the Eve of the Second World War," *The Turkish Yearbook* 27 (1997), p.75.

Mediterranean, leading to a chaos situation in the region throughout 1937.⁷²⁷ The result of the conference held in September 1937 was the Nyon Agreement of which Turkey was one of the signatories.

The agreement fundamentally provided routes for the merchant ships navigating in the Mediterranean, gave the duty of patrolling those routes to aircrafts and destroyers, and foresaw quick retaliation in any piracy attack.⁷²⁸ The reflection of the Nyon Conference in the Aegean Sea became the British and French patrolling of the area. In this regard, Turkey gave the right to use the port of Çeşme to the British navy in its policing duty yet without permission to make military flights or hunt in the region for the crew.⁷²⁹ With this move, the British military presence in the Aegean, which began with the Abyssinian crisis, was consolidated, similar to the British-Turkish relationship. The facing coast followed the permission of Turkey about Çeşme port with attention. Although it was acknowledged that Turkey allowed the British naval forces to stay only in the non-fortified area of the port without making any military installation, authorities estimated that this base would be used against the Dodecanese in case of a conflict in the Mediterranean and the reason behind the choice of Çeşme was its geographical situation vis-à-vis Leros, as the military backbone of the group.⁷³⁰

The Turkish authorities, on the other hand, evaluated the possible reactions of the Dodecanese. Turkish measures under the context of the Nyon Agreement were not put in

⁷²⁷ For a good summary of the British diplomatic situation vis-a-vis Italy based on Nyon Conference, see William C. Mills, "The Nyon Conference: Neville Chamberlain, Anthony Eden, and the Appeasement of Italy in 1937," *The International History Review* 15, no. 1 (Feb., 1993), pp. 1-22.

⁷²⁸ Peter Gretton, "The Nyon Conference- The Naval Aspect," *The English Historical Review* 90, no. 354 (Jan., 1975), p.108.

⁷²⁹ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..18.01.02/79.85..09, 7 October 1937.

⁷³⁰ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 21, "no title," 7 November 1937.

effect without challenges. For instance, Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü rejected the idea that would allow the British ships patrolling around the Turkish territorial waters together with the given bases in the Anatolian lands since it could provoke Italy to use the Dodecanese militarily against those coasts.⁷³¹ The clash between the Prime Minister İnönü, who suggested a cautious attitude due to the proximity of the bases to the Turkish mainland, and President Atatürk, who supported a more intimate relationship with the British, was regarded as one of the reasons behind the resignation of İnönü in 1937 from the office,⁷³² as an important development of the early republican history.

The Spanish Civil War and the Nyon Conference were the international dynamics that led to tension and the measures in the Archipelago, as an important part of the Mediterranean Sea. But, the bilateral antagonism between Turkey and the Dodecanese could not be terminated beyond those international dynamics either, since the extraordinary military conditions in the islands did not come to an end after the Abyssinian War. In other words, Italy kept on preparing for a war, which was supposed to come in near future.

One of the correspondences between Rhodes and Rome is a good exemplary of this understanding. In his letter, governor Lago emphasized the necessity of examining the military arrangement of the islands, yet without a return to the situation before the African War.⁷³³ According to him, the reexamination of the military situation in the islands needed to be made as soon as possible; however, while doing this, experience

⁷³¹ İsmet İnönü, *Konuşma, Demeç, Makale, Mesaj ve Söyleşileri*, comp. İlhan Turan, vol.1 (Ankara: TBMM, 2003), p.337

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 13, “*Problemi Militari*,” (Military Problems), 22 September 1936.

that designated the military importance of the Dodecanese previous year should have been kept in mind.⁷³⁴

After several correspondences, the decision about the stay of the majority of the troops in the islands like Leros and Rhodes together with the nucleus of troops in other islands was accepted. In addition, the construction works began during the war kept on progressing in full path with extra investments.⁷³⁵ Additionally, the transfer of ammunitions and the petroleum to the islands in huge volumes proceeded,⁷³⁶ thus, keeping the Turkish anxiety vis-à-vis the islands alive. For this reason, in addition to the other ones as explained above, 1937 symbolizes a year during which Turkey took further military steps which had implications for the Turkish-Dodecanesian contacts in return.

However, those military steps, which will be explained below, were different from the other ones geographically in the sense that while the military undertakings were perpetuated in the western and southwestern Anatolia in the same manner, Turkish security understanding expanded towards the eastern part of the southern region different from the previous epochs. This orientation of expanding the security line was directly related to issue of Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay), which became a major political and security issue for Turkey.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 13, “*Distaccamenti Militari nelle Isole Minori*,” (Military Detachments in the Minor Islands), 16 October 1936, “*Distaccamenti Militari nelle Isole Minori del Possedimento Egeo*,” (Military Detachments in the Minor Islands of the Aegean Possession), 28 November 1936.

⁷³⁶ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, 2. Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 7-030/1, 22 January 1937.

The Alexandretta problem for Turkey arose when the concerned parties negotiated and arranged the independence of the French mandate Syria in 1936.⁷³⁷ Although it was declared that the Sanjak would continue to be an autonomous region within the framework of independent Syria, as it had been under the mandate system, Turkish attention together with the claims of independence based on the self-determination principle due to the alleged Turkish majority was channeled to the region.⁷³⁸ Beginning with this year, Turkey carried out an effective diplomacy based on the region until the conclusion of the problem in 1939 with the joining of Sanjak, after its short term independence, to the Turkish Republic. It has been argued that both the European scene, in which Britain and France wanted to benefit from the Turkish strategic position in a possible war through an alliance, and the active Turkish diplomacy lasted between 1936 and 1939, played important roles in the conclusion of the problem in favor of Ankara.⁷³⁹

Although the problem of Sanjak was very influential on the orientation of Turkish foreign policy in itself, it was also related to the topic of this dissertation in terms of its geographical position. The location of Sanjak in the eastern Mediterranean was important for the Turkish strategy and security in the southern region of Turkey, the west of which was under the threat of an attack from the Dodecanese. This strategic importance, which would have been valuable even if Turkey had not perceived a threat from the West, gained much more significance with the intelligence reports of Turkey.

⁷³⁷ For the historical account of the Sanjak of Alexandretta, see Sarah D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Serhan Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: 1918-1939* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2005).

⁷³⁸ Shields, pp.29-31.

⁷³⁹ Shileds, p.11 and Ada, pp.234-235.

According to these reports of the Turkish General Staff, the Italians were making intensive propaganda in Sanjak of Alexandretta about the possible transfer of the region to Italy, rather than Turkey.⁷⁴⁰

This propaganda exceeded just spreading rumours in the region. For instance, the officials of the Italian Consulate in Aleppo made several visits to Alexandretta together with committees which collected official records and petitions from the people about their desire to unite with Italy.⁷⁴¹ Likewise, they tried to make contacts with various communities of Alexandretta like the Turks,⁷⁴² in order to serve their interests in the region.

From the point of territorial security, the Turkish understanding evolved into a much more comprehensive approach with the Italian involvement in the region. This study argues that the military undertakings in the southern parts of Anatolia vis-à-vis the Sanjak of Alexandretta cannot be regarded as a monolithic security understanding. Although the Sanjak of Alexandretta as a foreign policy issue could be evaluated within the framework of French-Syrian-Turkish relations, the security approach of the Turkish higher echelons towards the region could not be considered to have been limited to the region. Instead, it can be suggested that since the Aegean Islands of Italy were formulated as the dominant dynamic of the Turkish foreign and security policy as this dissertation argues for the interwar period, the abovementioned engagement of Italy led the Turkish political circles to think all the Anatolian coasts from the northwestern

⁷⁴⁰ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, 2. Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 7-22/1, 25 January 1937.

⁷⁴¹ Genelkurmay ATASE, Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, 2. Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 7-161/1, 24 August 1938.

⁷⁴² Genelkurmay ATASE, Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, 2. Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 7-017/1, 26 January 1937.

Anatolia to southern end would be compressed by the Italians, making the constant build-ups of Italy on Leros and Rhodes much more dangerous.

The relationship between the Aegean and Alexandretta can be interpreted as bidirectional. On the one hand, the islands could be used against the Sanjak of Alexandretta since aggression was an important proclivity of Italian foreign policy as 1935 designated. On the other hand, even if such an aggression did not take place, Turkey could feel the threat from the Dodecanese in a much more intensive way in case of realization of such a transfer, due to the geographical squeeze in the Mediterranean. In this sense, it must be emphasized that despite the particular dynamics of the Sanjak of Alexandretta issue, the army studied the military understanding of the coastal Anatolia with a holistic approach. In other words, it was not just a coincidence that Marshall Fevzi Çakmak occasionally made his long-term inspection visits to both south and southwestern Anatolia together.⁷⁴³ While the period between 1937 and 1939 is analyzed, the expansion of the defense line in the coastal regions and their connection to each other should also be kept in mind.

Turning to the military preparations of Turkey specifically for the Dodecanese Islands, 1937 and 1938 became years throughout which Turkey increasingly continued its military preparations in the western and southern coasts as did the facing the islands. As the following pages will show, these undertakings, together with other reasons, would result in other military and diplomatic problems in return.

In terms of the defensive line, the importance of Thrace, western and southwestern coasts continued throughout 1937 and 1938. The preparations in Thrace, the Straits, İzmir, and the other towns and cities in the region went hand in hand since

⁷⁴³ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/199.360..17, 6 July 1938.

the suspicions about a mutual Bulgarian-Italian attack from the West survived until the end of the period. The consecutive war games in 1937, one in the Thracian border against Bulgaria in July,⁷⁴⁴ and the other in Aydın, Söke, Aziziye, and Kuşadası in October,⁷⁴⁵ show this fact well.

The latter is worth mentioning because it was practiced directly against an expected Italian assault from the Dodecanese and was regarded as one of the most comprehensible war games of the interwar period, showing the defensive capability of Turkey in a possible military clash. The war games in Aydın were composed of two parts the first of which was about simple military tactics against an attack from both sea and air.⁷⁴⁶ The second section, on the other hand, was about controlling the communication and transportation means in case of a war.⁷⁴⁷

The evaluations made after the war games display that two weaknesses of Turkish position in the Western coasts were prominent. While the first one was the lack of suitable roads, which should be constructed strategically in the Aegean cities as soon as possible, despite the previous efforts; the second one was about the deficit of air and naval forces; in other words, the Turkish army's dependence on the land forces.⁷⁴⁸ Indeed, although the 37.27% of the state budget was allocated to the armed forces in the

⁷⁴⁴ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 21, “*Manovre Turche in Tracia e Manovre Bulgare al Confine Turco*,” (Turkish Maneuver in Thrace and Bulgarian Maneuver in the Turkish Border), 15 June 1937.

⁷⁴⁵ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/5.26..2, 27 September 1937.

⁷⁴⁶ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 21, “*Manovre dell'Esercito Turco nella Regione di Aydın*,” (Maneuver of Turkish Army in the Region of Aydın), 19 October 1937.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

first half of 1938, 28.70 of this proportion were spent for the army while 2.72 and 3.82 went for the navy and the aviation, respectively.⁷⁴⁹

In addition to the war games, other military preparations persisted in the Aegean during these two years as well. The condensation of the armed fortifications on the eve of the World War II was actualized to an extent that militarization in the coastal regions became an issue of debate among various institutions of the Turkish state. For instance, in 1937, the Turkish General Staff desired to change the statuses of particular coastal cities and towns like Bodrum, Muğla, Antalya, and Aydın in terms of classifying those regions as forbidden specifically for the foreigners.⁷⁵⁰ The correspondence among the General Staff, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows that the latter two institutions rejected the appeal of the military authorities on the grounds that since those areas were touristic, classifying them as forbidden military areas was not advantageous for the country.⁷⁵¹ According to the Minister of Interior, Şükrü Kaya, rather than increasing the number of forbidden areas, the authorities needed to augment the efficiency of the surveillance and control techniques.⁷⁵²

However, it should also be stated that the intense measures and controls of the General Staff were leading to discussions among the different institutions of the state likewise, since those precautions resulted in difficulties with other states as well. For instance, specific controls for the people coming to the Western Anatolia for the purposes of hunting and the imposition of some restrictions upon them in spite of their

⁷⁴⁹ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 24, “*Situazione Militare*,” (Military Situation), 1938.

⁷⁵⁰ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/64.427..39 , 20 February 1937.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Ibid.

licenses had led to diplomatic problems.⁷⁵³ Despite the existence of harmony among the different ministries of the government regarding the importance of the territorial defense in the coastal regions, the tougher approach of the General Staff was sometimes faced with the warning of other ministries, like the above-mentioned case through which the Ministry of Interior explained the necessity to impose restrictions and controls on foreigners within the knowledge of the concerned diplomatic missions.⁷⁵⁴

But despite the encouragement of the Ministry of Interior in terms of working in harmony with consulates with respect to the procedures concerning foreigners, the distrust towards them as well as diplomatic missions were widespread, making such a concordance impossible. Since the military undertakings gained speed as the Second World War approached, the espionage had become a major threat to the security understanding of both parties, without distinction. As the Turks in the coastal regions regarded the foreign nationals as dangerous to territorial security, the Italians in the Dodecanese had the same view specifically towards the Turks, Greeks, and the British in terms of espionage. As Turkey tried to keep its military measures secret, the Italians made efforts to prevent the flow of information specifically from Leros. For instance, in addition to taking measures to limit the entrance of the ships and yachts to Rhodes, the Dodecanese administration, the governor of which was Cesare de Vecchi now instead of Mario Lago, passed a regulation that prohibited taking photos in Leros.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ TC Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, Ata-Zeybek Klasörü, 37-113/40, 14 May 1937.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ ASMAE Busta Dodecanneso 15, “*Proibizione dell’Uso delle Machine Fotografiche da Bordo dei Piroscafi che Toccano Lero*,” (Prohibition of the Use of Camera from the Board of Ships Moving Towards Leros), 30 December 1937 and 10 February 1938. Within the framework of this prohibition, an American citizen had been taken into custody since she had been caught while taking panoramic photos of the bays of Leros.

The political and military authorities on both sides knew, or estimated at least, the identities of the spies. While the Italian authorities followed the individuals from the Muslim community among which specific people were supposed to send information to the Turkish government and journals like *Cumhuriyet* and *Kurun*,⁷⁵⁶ the Turkish authorities pursued not only the foreigners but also the Turks, specifically the opponents of the regime living in the coastal regions, underlining the inadequacy of the counter espionage means in Anatolia.⁷⁵⁷

Both sides directly accused the consulates and other diplomatic missions, apart from the ordinary people, of their surveillance and spying activities. The distrust of the Dodecanesian administration reached to such an extent that the authorities discussed even the closure of the diplomatic missions in Rhodes since the course of events in history designated that those consulates caused much more harm than the expected benefit, according to them.⁷⁵⁸ Although such an act did not take place at least for the Turkish and Greek consulates, the Dodecanese administration kept on blaming the diplomatic missions not only with espionage activities but also with the efforts to bring disorder to the islands.⁷⁵⁹

The accusations directed towards the Turkish authorities were not just about espionage and the claims for their disruptive efforts in the islands, but about the migration that occasionally took place between the islands and the Turkish mainland.

⁷⁵⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 15, “*Trattamento Turchi nel Dodecanneso*,” (The Treatment of Turks in the Dodecanese), 24 January 1938.

⁷⁵⁷ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/100.644.15, 19 July 1939.

⁷⁵⁸ ASMAE Busta Dodecanneso 15, “*Appunti*,” (Notes). This document is a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without date or proper subject.

⁷⁵⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 13, “*Situazione nelle Isole Italiane dell’Egeo*,” (Situation in the Italian Islands of the Aegean), 14 August 1937, “*Voci Tendentiose sulle Isole dell’Egeo*,” (Biased Voices on the Aegean Islands), 8 September 1937.

Actually, the phenomenon of migration had always existed in the Aegean in the period of this study. However, the migration of the people from the Dodecanese to Turkey increased in the 1930s, specifically during the second half of this decade.

The most important reason behind this phenomenon was the total militarization of the islands which began with the Abyssinian crisis. During this period, people sought to flee in order to escape from the hardships that militarization brought to the islands and from being sent to Africa with the Italian contingents. But the migration did not decrease with the end of the Abyssinian War. Instead, the departures increased and this became another problem in this relationship. After the replacement of Mario Lago with Cesare de Vecchi as the governor of the islands in 1936, the harsher Italianization approach and the tougher military understanding of the latter resulted in discomfort on the islands.⁷⁶⁰ Although the Italian administration occasionally emphasized the satisfaction of the Muslim community with the Italian rule,⁷⁶¹ the efforts of the Muslims to migrate to the "motherland" were on the rise specifically after 1936.

In reality, the official view about the Muslims, especially during the reign of Mario Lago, was positive due to their balancing character vis-à-vis the Greeks as the dominant element.⁷⁶² Therefore, it is argued that the conditions of the Muslims were much better compared to those of the Greeks during the Italian colonization, specifically

⁷⁶⁰ In order to elaborate on the different approaches of the two Governors, see Nicholas Doumanis, *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism's Empire* (Houndmills, Hampshire: Macmillan; New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

⁷⁶¹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 15, "Trattamento Turchi nel Dodecanneso," (The Treatment of Turks in the Dodecanese), 24 January 1938.

⁷⁶² ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 991, "Cancelliere del Consolato di Turchia in Rodi," Consul of the Turkish Consulate in Rhodes," 13 November, 1928.

in the era of Mario Lago,⁷⁶³ although problems especially in terms of property matters were occasionally experienced. However, the life in the islands seems to become unbearable due to the tough life conditions based on rising militarization together with the cultural Italianization policy of De Vecchi, after 1936.

As a result, specifically in 1937 and 1938, migration became an important phenomenon for which the Italian administration in the Dodecanese blamed the Turkish authorities in Turkey and on Rhodes. According to the Dodecanese administration, the Turkish Consulate on Rhodes was encouraging Muslims to migrate to Anatolia in order to make them the swordsmen of Turkey.⁷⁶⁴ When the Turkish government's permits for those migrants to stay in the western Anatolia⁷⁶⁵ are added to the Turkish consulate's alleged efforts to encourage the community to migrate, it is not surprising to see that another problem had emerged between the coasts.

However, although Italy blamed either the Turkish government or its diplomatic mission for migration, this issue did not take place only among the Muslims. For instance, the Greeks also escaped from the islands to Anatolia, making the problem threefold. When such events occurred, the Turkish authorities tried to send them to Greece, rather than the Dodecanese.⁷⁶⁶ Yet, since Greece did not always accept those islanders, the Turkish authorities found themselves in a diplomatic crisis. This complicated problem sometimes led the Turkish authorities to discuss even sending those people to the Greek islands in an illegal way although they underlined the bad

⁷⁶³ Nicholas Doumanis, "Dodecanese Nostalgia for Mussolini's Rule," *History Today* 48, no.2 (February 1998), p.18.

⁷⁶⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 13, "*Voci Tendentiose sulle Isole dell'Egeo*," (Biased Voices on the Aegean Islands), 17 September 1937.

⁷⁶⁵ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/116.811..12, 20 August 1938.

⁷⁶⁶ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/116.84..2, 30 May 1936.

results in which such an action could result.⁷⁶⁷ The fact that the conditions of the islands in the last years of the interwar period were not specific to any ethnic group could also be seen among the Italian community. In other words, besides the Turks and the Greeks, the Italian soldiers occasionally fled to Turkey in small boats, away from the tough conditions of the military service.⁷⁶⁸

As could be seen, regardless of the ethnicity and the religion, people sought to enter Turkey in legal or illegal ways. On the eve of World War Two, this issue became an important problem between Turkey and the islands. Since the enmity between those two entities was obvious in the last two years of the period, those incidents resulted in diplomatic problems, usually leading to the accusation of the Turks and Turkish diplomatic missions, which were also blamed for espionage and efforts to bring disorder to the islands. All those matters continued during the Second World War.

While the relationship between the Turkish mainland and the islands were being destroyed step by step not only by the mutual military undertakings but also by the diplomatic problems, the Turkish government continued to improve its relationship with Britain and Greece in those last two years of the period on the diplomatic and military levels. For instance, both the Turkish and Greek military staff made visits to each other, specifically about the defense of Thrace and the Aegean during 1937. Therefore, it was no coincidence that after the visit of the Turkish Chief of General Staff to Greece in September,⁷⁶⁹ and the visit of his Greek counterpart to Istanbul, which was tried to be

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 030..10.0.0./116.811..8, 27 July 1937.

⁷⁶⁹ TC Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, Ata Zeybek Klasörü, 37-113/29, 10 September 1937.

kept secret,⁷⁷⁰ different views and rumors were put forward. One of the most remarkable ones was about a Turkish-Greek agreement which foresaw cooperation in the Aegean to an extent that in the case of a conflict, Turkey would occupy the Greek islands of Samos, Chios, Lesbos, and Lemnos in order to defend the islands and the Aegean territory.⁷⁷¹ According to the Italian officials, those kinds of arrangements were the results of the British intervention in Aegean issues.⁷⁷²

What happened actually was the conclusion of another friendship treaty between Turkey and Greece in 1938. According to this, the parties reiterated the clauses of the precedent bilateral agreements like the ones of 1930 and 1933,⁷⁷³ especially with regard to remain neutral if one of the parties was attacked, and to make effort in order to bring peaceful solutions to problems. But, the above-mentioned rumors about the possible military cooperation in the Aegean, which was obviously a fragile matter concerning the sovereignty of the islands close to the Dardanelles, continued until the end of the interwar period.⁷⁷⁴ What was more important than the reality of those rumors actually was the impressive point that the Turkish-Greek diplomatic and military contacts reached on the eve of the Second World War. The other powers could even speculate about those kinds of plans, which supposedly constituted the opposite pole in the region against the Italians and the Bulgarians.

⁷⁷⁰ ASMAE, Busta Turchia 21, “*Rapporti Militari Turco-Greci*,” (Turkish Greek Military Relations), 17 December 1937.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² Ibid.

⁷⁷³ For more information about the treaty, see Soysal, pp.588-590.

⁷⁷⁴ For instance, in 1938, people were talking about cooperation both in Thrace and in the Aegean. ASMAE, Busta, “*Intesa Balcanica- Accordi Militari*,” (The Balkan Entente- Military Accords), 2 March 1938.

Even though the most important dynamic behind the Turkish-Greek friendship and cooperation in the Aegean was not the British as the Italians thought, London constituted the great power framework in the region, after all. But it should be emphasized that Britain's stance towards Turkey and Italy was actually contradictory. That is to say, the Abyssinian crisis was an important step towards the British irritation about the Dodecanese and the military bases therein, as well as accordingly closer relationship with the Turks. Yet, London resisted breaking away from Rome completely, until the very end, with the hope of detaching it from Berlin.⁷⁷⁵

Despite its complicated stance in the Mediterranean, the British had become an important parameter in the region, particularly in the Aegean. The Italian apprehension reflects this fact well, since the Dodecanese administration was following the British involvement in the region closely. According to the administration, British plans for war, which were foreseen for the next spring, were ready by the beginning of 1938.⁷⁷⁶ The assumption stated that the Dodecanese would be occupied within twenty-four hours in the case of a clash with the exception of Leros, which would be blocked by the sea and occupied by the land forces thereafter.⁷⁷⁷

Regardless of the reality of such assumptions especially for 1938, the presence of Britain in the region had become a significant element for the Dodecanese. During a time that Britain was still looking for ways to make Italy at least neutral, the expectation of the Italians was the possible British capture of the islands. In this sense, the state of

⁷⁷⁵ Donald Cameron Watt, "Chamberlain's Ambassadors," in *Diplomacy and World Power, Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890-1950*, ed. Micheal Dockrill and Brian McKercher (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 155-161.

⁷⁷⁶ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 15, "Informazioni sull'Attività delle Autorità Britannica," (Information on the Activity of British Authorities), 4 February 1938.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

affairs after 1938 sprinting towards a war, would show that the understanding of the Italians were much more visionary than that of the British, the hopes of which were groundless for Italy. Therefore, these events, which will be discussed below, would pave the way to the Second World War, and also to a British-Turkish alliance in 1939, after which the parties would indeed discuss the capture of the Dodecanese.

The *Anschluss* in March 1938 and the Munich Conference in September 1938 that formally gave the Sudetenland to Germany were significant developments, since the European public opinion loudly criticized the appeasement policy of London, because apparently the Nazis had consolidated their power in Central and Southeastern Europe after those decisions.⁷⁷⁸ In this context, the strategic position of Turkey, which had already proved its value in the Mediterranean in relation to Italy, came into prominence one more time, this time in relation to Germany regarding the British interests in the East.⁷⁷⁹ Therefore, the alliance in terms of a Mediterranean Pact, as an idea that Turkey had supported since 1934, began to be discussed again, even though it did not produce any result, again due to the British reluctance to give assurances to all Mediterranean and Balkan states.⁷⁸⁰ But, even if Britain had not accepted a formal alliance yet, it had supported Turkey financially through the release of a credit of sixteen million pounds in

⁷⁷⁸ Ludmila Zhivkova, *Anglo-Turkish Relations 1933-1939* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976), p.60, p.73.

⁷⁷⁹ The British opinion about Turkey was as follows in 1938: "It must be remembered that Turkey was in a very special and exceptional position. She constituted a very real bulwark against German expansion in the Near and Middle East. Turkey should never have been allowed to have allied herself with Germany in the Great War and in present circumstances, we ought to take every care to avoid a repetition of that mistake." quoted by Stephen Joseph Stillwell, *Anglo-Turkish Relations in the Interwar Era* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), p.166.

⁷⁸⁰ Zhivkova, pp.61-62.

May 1938, to help Ankara to spend more money to its roads and railways and to buy new weapons.⁷⁸¹

In July 1938, Turkey signed a friendship treaty with France, with which it was experiencing problems due to the Sanjak of Alexandretta.⁷⁸² Although the problems over the matter persisted for a while, specifically after September, a kind of rapprochement between France and Turkey was reached, too. The reason behind this reconciliation was twofold. On the one hand, the European scene, in which the Nazi threat was expanding day by day as the Sudetenland crisis designated, necessitated such a friendship for the parties. On the other hand, the fate of Alexandretta had become perceptible in the end of 1938 through which Turkey had gained an advantage with the allowance of France, which seemed to decide sacrificing the region for the sake of the Turkish alliance based on the aforementioned European scene on the eve of a major clash.⁷⁸³ Thus, after the Munich Conference, France even proposed a mutual aid treaty to Turkey, which refused the proposal since it desired a tripartite agreement between Turkey, France, and Britain.⁷⁸⁴

Although Britain had made effort in order to provide rapprochement between Turkey and France, it rejected such a tripartite alliance on the grounds that such a treaty could provoke Germany and Italy. As Millman states, “until spring 1939 Anglo-Turkish relations remained the story of a Turkish attempt to bring the British to some more formal relationship, and of a British effort to so arrange their greater politics that such

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² For more information about this agreement, see Soysal, p.547.

⁷⁸³ Ada, pp.185-195, Shields, p.246.

⁷⁸⁴ Zhivkova, pp.66-67.

relationship would be unnecessary.”⁷⁸⁵ Two turning points for Britain in terms of its foreign policy understanding were the Italian invasion of Albania and the German attack on Czechoslovakia in the first months of the 1939, indicating the total bankruptcy of the British appeasement policy. Therefore, after direct negotiations, British-Turkish Declaration was eventually announced on 12 May 1939. With this declaration, the parties promised to cooperate effectively and to give aid to each other in the event of a clash in the Mediterranean.⁷⁸⁶ After the final conclusion of the Sanjak of Alexandretta issue, a similar declaration was signed between France and Turkey in June 1939. Those declarations would take the form of a treaty in October 1939, after the Second World War had broken out with the German attack on Poland in September. In this way, Turkey had finally gained the assurances that it had sought since 1935.

This dissertation argues that the events around the Mediterranean, specifically around the Dodecanese for Turkey played a major role in the rapprochement of those two powers step by step, leading to the Turkish-British-French alliance in 1939. With the realization of this agreement, on the other hand, Turkey gained confidence in the Aegean against a possible attack from the Dodecanese Islands. That is to say, those islands, from which the Anatolian territory could be attacked from the Mediterranean, became one of the reasons and would be one of the results of the agreement, which determined the future orientation of Turkish foreign policy.

The military preparations that took place just after those declarations will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter, since they were important parts of the Turkish military strategy concerning the Second World War. At this point, it is important to note

⁷⁸⁵ Brock Millman, *Ill-Made Alliance: Anglo-Turkish Relations, 1939-1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p.160.

⁷⁸⁶ For the full text of the Declaration, see Soysal pp.591-599

that the Turkish military authorities, mostly with the help and supervision of the British and French officials, gave priority to the Aegean coasts together with Thrace, the military conditions of which would be re-handled together. The Turkish strategic plans, which would be constituted within a consultation with its allies, would target the Dodecanese. These two facts while proving the above-mentioned hypothesis one more time also show that when the Second World War broke out, the Dodecanese was still one of the significant components of the Turkish concerns.

This chapter examined the period from 1934 until the outbreak of the Second World War. 1933 and 1934 saw the transformation of the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese one more time, displaying that the problems in the Aegean turned into the military dynamics similar to the first years of the Turkish Republic. The aggressive tone in Italian foreign policy together with the excessive military undertakings in the Dodecanese led to a Turkish reaction. However, different from the previous epoch of tension, Turkey dealt with this threat more effectively in this period, since Ankara was able to break its diplomatic loneliness.

In terms of military approach, the undertakings were handled according to the developments on the islands and in the Mediterranean, in general. In terms of diplomacy, on the other hand, Turkey oriented its foreign policy based on the “Dodecanese dynamic,” by making alliances, and taking initiatives related to its security problems. In that sense, this chapter argues that the Italian threat based on the Dodecanese became one of the most dominant factors in Turkish foreign and security policy in this term.

When the period ended with the outbreak of the Second World War, those islands were still very important for Turkey's security. But interestingly, this problematic relationship with the facing coast that was full of tension in the last five years of the interwar period also had led to benefits for Turkey. For instance, the change of the Straits regime was born out of the conditions of the period, yet had influences beyond its era, reaching even today. Likewise, as the main reason that made Turkey to come closer to Britain, ending up with an alliance on the eve of the Second World War, had strengthened the Turkish position vis-à-vis the islands by 1939, although the balance of power in the Mediterranean was prone to change, as the following pages will show.

CHAPTER 6

PEACE IN WAR: THE DODECANESE AND TURKEY DURING WORLD WAR TWO, 1939-1945

When the Second World War broke out, Turkey had secured the alliance of Britain and France against an attack from the Mediterranean, in which the Dodecanese Islands had been formulated as the major source of threat since the foundation of the Republic. This chapter argues that despite the rise of other major strategic and diplomatic concerns for Turkey during the Second World War, the Dodecanese did not simply fall from the agenda of the political and military circles in Turkey. That is to say, during the Second World War, the Dodecanese turned to be “one of the” the problems of the Turkish policy makers, especially compared to its key place in the interwar period. But, the buildup of other issues did not belittle the position of the islands.

The islands became a significant element of diplomacy between Turkey and the Allies as well as the Axis. Indeed, from 1939 to 1945, the Dodecanese always remained on the negotiation table since the parties knew the sensibilities of Ankara towards the region well. However, in spite of all the diplomatic undertakings and plans, Turkey, as a nonbelligerent country until the very end of the war, succeeded to be in peace with the islands which were under the control of the Axis and occasionally experienced raids, military attacks, war and occupation. Turkey, through its policy of non-belligerency, managed not to fight with/over the islands despite their proximity to the Turkish mainland, which even the shells of the battles in the region reached.

The Dodecanese influenced the Turkish foreign and security policy formulations in terms of war or peace during this period. But, the geographic contiguity between the islands and the mainland led to other problems concerning Turkish foreign policy, such as the flux of refugees to the mainland from the Dodecanese as well as the humanitarian issues that arose from famine on the islands. In this respect, it is seen that the Dodecanese presented a multifaceted problem for Turkey during the war that surpassed the boundaries of the strategic terms.

Yet, despite this multifarious meaning, the Aegean takes the backseat in the academic literature concerning Turkey in the Second World War, about which William Hale suggests that there are plenty of works especially if compared with the studies about the precedent and subsequent periods.⁷⁸⁷ Thus, this chapter aims to overcome the existing deficiency, by looking at what the Dodecanese meant for Turkey during the war years.

The General Framework of Turkish Politics during the Second World War

The Second World War could be described as an epoch full of difficulties that the Turkish government had to deal both in its domestic and foreign politics. The efforts of Ankara to sustain its position of non-belligerency in spite of its legal and political commitments to the Allies, as well as to take the steps necessary to defend its borders in case of an assault. Therefore, it is important to analyze the general framework of Turkish politics, which will display the understanding of the period and will help place the Dodecanese into context.

⁷⁸⁷ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p.56.

One of the features of the period was the nature of the one-party regime of İsmet İnönü, who had become the president of Turkey after the death of Kemal Atatürk in 1938. İnönü, as the president of the Republic and the National Leader (*Milli Şef*) of the Republican People's Party, aggregated the power in his own hands with changes in the cabinets and in the code of the party.⁷⁸⁸

One of these changes was the replacement of Celal Bayar with Refik Saydam as the Prime Minister in 1939, due to disagreements in political and economic matters between İnönü and Bayar.⁷⁸⁹ Refik Saydam would be in office until 1942, when he was succeeded by Şükrü Saraçoğlu. Saraçoğlu, before 1942, had been the Minister of Foreign Affairs since 11 November 1938, instead of Tevfik Rüştü Aras. Zürcher suggests that the President was in complete control of the politics during this period and both of his Prime Ministers were actually the implementers of İnönü's decisions.⁷⁹⁰

The historians still discuss the era of İnönü based on its authoritarian/totalitarian dynamics.⁷⁹¹ Regardless of the conclusions that these discussions reach, one of the most significant reflections of his style of presidency for the topic of this dissertation was the domination of İnönü in the decision-making process of Turkish foreign policy. Almost all studies related to Turkish foreign policy in the Second World War indicate this point. Edward Weisband suggests that İnönü spent most of his energy on foreign policy issues to the extent that the policies about the domestic and economic issues took a backseat.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁸ For more information about how İnönü made changes in the system, see Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi, 1938-1945*, vol.1-2 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

⁷⁸⁹ Koçak, vol.2, pp.46-48.

⁷⁹⁰ Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, p.185.

⁷⁹¹ The approaches of both Zürcher, *Turkey*, and Koçak, *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi* reflect this understanding.

⁷⁹² Edward Weisband, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2002), pp.20-21.

Likewise, Deringil emphasizes the fact that İnönü prioritized foreign affairs and throughout the period he met frequently with the high ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to give instructions.⁷⁹³

When the President's control on the Ministry is kept in mind, it is possible to suggest that the command of the Foreign Ministers over the decisions were of secondary importance. Ministers, Şükrü Saraçoğlu (1938-1942), Numan Menemencioğlu (1942-1944), and Hasan Saka (1944-1947) who held office respectively, during the Second World War, were substantially under the control of İnönü. Deringil argues that the President did not hesitate to sacrifice any officers, in order to execute his foreign policy understanding. For example, Numan Menemencioğlu, one of the most brilliant personalities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since the foundation of the Republic, was dismissed by İnönü from his post in September 1944, in order for Turkey to come closer with the Allies, which had labeled Menemencioğlu pro-German.⁷⁹⁴

While the President's control over the state apparatus could be reviewed within the debate on authoritarianism, his meticulousness about foreign policy necessitates an approach more than the above-mentioned discussion, owing to the aberrant conditions of the world war. In this respect, Weisband suggests that the most significant feature of the war-time Turkish foreign policy was to keep the country out of the war.⁷⁹⁵ Hale interprets this view as an exaggeration and says: "if İnönü and his colleagues had been determined to stay out of the war from the moment they signed the alliance with Britain and France in 1939, then one would have to conclude that they blatantly intended not to

⁷⁹³ Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu*, p.46.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.49-50.

⁷⁹⁵ Weisband, pp.37-38.

carry out their commitments under it, or they thought that the circumstances under which they were supposed to do so would never arise.”⁷⁹⁶

In other words, according to Hale, staying out of the war was not a poignant aim since 1939, but an attitude developed through time and events. The archival material cited below regarding the plans to invade the Dodecanese by the Turkish and British officials in 1939-1940 is close to the understanding of Hale.⁷⁹⁷ However, it should also be stressed that the argument of Weisband is thoroughly applicable for the period after 1940, which appears to have been a turning point for the stance of Turkey, dealing with various threats in terms of its security.

Implementing an active foreign policy in order to remain non-belligerent in the conditions of the Second World War was not the only means that Turkey used to protect its boundaries. In this regard, Turkish officials employed an austere military strategy that depended on total mobilization of troops in case of an attack. To this end, the target number for the land army increased to 1.3 million men.⁷⁹⁸ This mobilization, while closely related to the Turkish security as a complementary part of the Turkish foreign policy of the time, had also some implications for the Turkish economy, which is another significant topic concerning Second World War Turkey.

Boratav states that even if Turkey did not enter the war until 1945, it had to deal with the economic problems that the existing conditions brought, like the aforementioned mobilization through which an important portion of the male population

⁷⁹⁶ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p.56.

⁷⁹⁷ Neither Hale, nor this dissertation implies that Turkey was ideologically prone to war in 1939. They just emphasize the nuance between a solid permanent non-belligerency approach from the beginning and a realist foreign policy responding the developments in the surrounding environment. Otherwise, this dissertation agrees with that the anti-revisionist and peaceful nature of Turkish foreign policy is an undeniable fact.

⁷⁹⁸ Tekeli and İlkin, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si*, p.402.

was called to arms,⁷⁹⁹ leading to a decrease in agricultural production. In addition to the sharp decline in agricultural production, the state imposed excessive taxation to deal with the problems within the economy, yet caused fraud and tax evasion as reciprocation.⁸⁰⁰ Besides, the decreased production levels, lowered imports as a result of war together with the needs of a bigger army led to scarcity, inflation, and the rise of the black market in the country.⁸⁰¹ Turkey tried to cope with the problems in the economy with laws, like National Protection Law of 1940, which included rationing, the control of the labor market and the conditions of work, and strict price controls.⁸⁰² Although these price controls were dropped in 1942 due to their negative impact on the economy with the change in the government, this time, inflation appeared as a major problem in the country.⁸⁰³

As another compensation for the rising economic problems, such as decreasing tax revenues, the rising black market, and profiteering; the state implemented a wealth tax in 1942, which would be applied to all businessmen, tradesmen and industrialists on paper but majorly would be imposed to the non-Muslim bourgeoisie, rather than the Muslim one.⁸⁰⁴ This led to the alienation of the bourgeoisie from the state regardless of ethnic and religious dynamics based on the insecure economic impositions of state against the capitalist accumulation.⁸⁰⁵ These problems that the war time economy

⁷⁹⁹ Boratav, p.81.

⁸⁰⁰ Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *20. Yüzyılda Ortadoğu Ekonomileri Tarihi* (İstanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi, 2002), pp.40-41.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Boratav, pp.83-84.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Pamuk and Owen, p.41.

⁸⁰⁵ Keyder, p.159.

brought were regarded as one of the reasons for the extended distance between the state and society after the war.⁸⁰⁶

The Turkish politics throughout the Second World War reflect a complicated context. The authoritarian tendencies which can be observed not only within the party and state administration, but also in the state-society relations and the economic difficulties stemming from the war economics as well as the decisions of the state to provide solutions to these problems, like the one of Wealth Tax, are major phenomena still being discussed. However, foreign policy of Turkey, which has been referred as non-belligerent or neutral, seems as an accomplishment, at least on the basis of the achievement of being outside of the war all the way, especially if the devastation experienced in other countries through war and occupation is kept in mind. Therefore, the position of Turkey during the Second World War poses a significant dilemma to the scholars of the period, obstructing to make monolithic interpretations.

To Fight or Not to Fight? The Turkish Understanding of the Aegean, 1939-1940

When Turkey declared mutual assistance with Britain in May 1939 and with France in June 1939, the most important dynamic in Turkish foreign and security policy was the Italian threat perceived from the Dodecanese. But, within a couple of months during 1939, the basis of the Turkish concerns transformed into a multifaceted phenomenon in which the Turkish officials had to take Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union into consideration altogether. In this part of the chapter, the Turkish position will be revealed in terms of the impact of the Aegean, until the entrance of Italy into the war in

⁸⁰⁶ Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, pp.206-207.

June 1940, yet, without putting other variables aside. This dissertation argues that in addition to the existence of the problems with the Soviet Union in the foreign relations and the danger that the Nazi Germany posed to the Balkans in the first months of the entire period, Turkish officials continued to deal with the Dodecanese in all the negotiations with the Allies although the literature does not emphasize the details of these negotiations.⁸⁰⁷

With the declaration between Turkey, France, and Britain, the parties had promised to assist each other with regard to a war in the Mediterranean, and accordingly to constitute a treaty to this end. Therefore, after those declarations, they began to discuss the details of this treaty that would eventually be signed in October 1939. As one of the reasons for the mutual assistance declarations, especially for Turkey, the Dodecanese became one of the most significant issues of the proceedings, to the extent that documents in the National Archives in London and in the archives of the Turkish General Staff belonging the second half of 1939 refer to the capture of the Dodecanese as well as an attack to the western Anatolia from the Aegean Sea.

It is necessary to emphasize that the plans for the Dodecanese were not significant just for the importance of the region for Turkey parallel to what the previous chapters argued. Instead, related to the aforementioned transformation of Turkish

⁸⁰⁷ In this sense, the literature highlights the Balkans and Thrace vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and Germany when the Turkish position in the Second World War was searched. In order see an example, see Edward Reginald Vere-Hodge, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1918-1948*, (Ambilly-Annemasse : Impr. Franco-Suisse, 1950); Türkaya Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1939-1945* (Ankara : Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1965); Weisband, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türkiye*, Dodecanese is barely mentioned in those sources. However, there are some studies like the one of Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu*; the most recent book about the Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War, İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si*, vol.1, talks much more about the importance of the Archipelago. Nicholas Tamkin's book *Britain, Turkey, and the Soviet Union, 1940-45* could be added to this group, although his regional narrative focuses more on the relationship between Turkey and the Soviet Union in the region.

foreign policy into a much more multidimensional context based on various threats from different geographies during the second half of 1939, the Dodecanese turned into a part of this multi-faceted whole, from the strategic point of view. For instance, according to the Turkish General Staff, the Aegean was a pressing problem not only in terms of an attack that could come from the islands, but also in terms of the danger that Bulgaria, reinforced by its allies, could make an attempt against Thrace when Turkey was struggling with a possible landing in the western Anatolia from the Aegean Sea.⁸⁰⁸

Obviously, the defense of the Western zone of Turkey was considered from a holistic perspective in which the fate of Thrace and southwestern Anatolia was regarded as dependent on each other. The commentary of General Mittelberger, a German consultant at the Turkish Military College, indicates a similar point from a different angle. He stated that the security of western Anatolia and the Straits could not be provided if Thrace fell upon the hands of enemy.⁸⁰⁹ This understanding of Turkey that tied the Aegean, the Straits, and Thrace to each other would expand from time to time to the Balkans and the Middle East especially for the Allies during the war. In the conditions of the summer of 1939, however, the most fearful scenario of Turkey was the likelihood of an assault to either western Anatolia or Thrace, after which the other one would fall into the hands of the enemy, which would probably be Italy and Bulgaria backed by the Italians.

Since Italy had occupied Albania in April 1939, Turkish concerns had concentrated on the next Italian move, which was calculated as either the occupation of

⁸⁰⁸Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-038/2, 21 June 1939.

⁸⁰⁹Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 1-063/2, 6 December 1939.

Greece for the domination of the Mediterranean or an attack to Turkey with Bulgaria, through which an action against Thrace could be actualized,⁸¹⁰ simultaneously with the use of the Dodecanese. This fear of Turkey led to plans for the islands, thus reducing the risk for the western Anatolia including the Straits region, during the negotiations took place between Britain, France, and Turkey for the Tripartite Pact.

The documents from the Turkish General Staff indicate that Turkey was making plans both to neutralize the islands with the Allies and to prepare the country for an assault from the Dodecanese, showing the pattern of fear inherited from the interwar period. In terms of the latter, the foremost intent of the Turkish army had been defined as the prevention of the landing of the enemy armies to Muğla, İzmir and Çanakkale, regardless of the category of the assault, and in case of landing, as warding of the forces before they progress.⁸¹¹ However, the correspondence between the Turkish and British military authorities shows that Britain expected raids from the Italian islands targeting Anatolia rather than a large-scale campaign as the Turks thought, owing to the strong position of the British and French navies in the Mediterranean,⁸¹² demonstrating the diverging opinions towards the Dodecanese among the Allies.

Those kinds of divergent approaches and conflicts occurred in other matters as well, during the negotiations. For instance, according to the British and French officials, Turkey should have given the details of the Turkish military condition especially in Çanakkale, İzmir, and Muğla, specifically Marmaris, to the Allied officers since the

⁸¹⁰Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-038/2, 21 June 1939.

⁸¹¹Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgekeri, 3-038/1, 21 June 1939.

⁸¹² Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-034/2, 17 June 1939.

above-mentioned navies would protect the Turkish borders in the Aegean Sea, and the ships would use the harbor facilities of these bases.⁸¹³ The answers of the Turkish General Staff to these occasional demands were negative. That is to say, they refused to give the necessary information about İzmir and Çanakkale on the grounds that Turkish law prohibited the provision of information about the strongholds (*müstahkem mevki*).⁸¹⁴ According to the Turkish military officials, Çanakkale and İzmir were strongholds and the preparations had already been made in those regions, but information could be given about Marmaris, for which defensive problems were prevalent.⁸¹⁵

As can be anticipated, the British became irritated with the attitude of the Turkish General Staff, insisting on the necessary information about İzmir, Çanakkale, and Thrace.⁸¹⁶ It is important to note that these difficulties among the Allies stemmed not only from the Turkish feeling of insecurity and mistrust, but also from the dissidence about the strategy that would be used in the region. For instance, during the negotiations in June 1939, although the British declared that they would not retaliate immediately to any attack of the enemy in the shape of submarine action and of the bombing against the civilians, without taking the world public opinion into the consideration, especially, that of the United States;⁸¹⁷ the Turkish General Staff answered its British counterpart with the determination of the Turkish commanders regarding the immediate response to the

⁸¹³ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-034/1, 17 June 1939.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-20/2, 29 July 1939.

⁸¹⁷ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-36/01, 16 June 1939.

submarine attacks.⁸¹⁸ Those kinds of conflicts would continue throughout the Second World War years and would frequently reverberate on the Dodecanese issue, as will be seen below.

Those were the opinions and the challenges dominant during the negotiations, yet, more of a defensive nature. The Allies also discussed a plan for the capture of the Dodecanese during the summer and autumn of 1939, as they would do again in 1940. The aforementioned confusions and conflicts seem to exist also in this subject in a way that there are many different and contradictory accounts about the Dodecanesian plan in different archival resources.

One of the most perplexing issues in this respect was how the operation against the islands would be handled. The manner of the Turkish General Staff seems more definite, because in the documents, the operation plan was clearly described as naval and air domination provided by the British and French, after which invasion by land forces that were comprised by the Turkish soldiers would be done.⁸¹⁹ However, despite the clear depiction of the subsequent attitude towards the Dodecanese in the Turkish documents, the British archival material reveals the complex nature of the issue. According to one of the British correspondences, although the Allied naval and air domination were extremely important for the sake of the operation, the military equipment necessary for this attack in the sea and air, which were actually present in the

⁸¹⁸ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-035/1, 17 June 1939.

⁸¹⁹ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-038/1, 21 June 1939.

Middle East, may not have been used for this end, due to their probable utilization in Libya.⁸²⁰

In this regard, the discussion about the numbers and the conditions of the Turkish military equipment, especially regarding the fighters and the bombers, was not a coincidence,⁸²¹ reflecting the Allied considerations about the probable use of Turkish arms, in the absence of British ones. Similarly, another document shows that the British authorities negotiated the land forces that would occupy the islands, based on their suspicions about the quality of the Turkish ground forces and their ability to capture the islands.⁸²² Although they finally acknowledged that there maybe would not be adequate British and French troops for the Dodecanese, and that the operation was closer to the Turkish national aspirations than the British or French ones,⁸²³ the details of the plan were far from the certainty that the Turkish documents designate.

But, in spite of the existence of discrepancies in the views, shared opinions about the islands were existent for sure. One of them was about the strategic and military importance of those islands for the Mediterranean balance of power. As the interwar period shows, the discomfort of Turkey had stemmed from the Italian view of the islands, as a stepping stone for the Italian expansion in the east. In 1939, the Italian aims, which had once depended on *Mare Nostrum*, had further expanded to gain access to the oceans, either the Indian or the Atlantic.⁸²⁴ In order to achieve this, Rome needed to break up the encirclement composing of Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Cyprus, Malta, and

⁸²⁰ The National Archives, DEFE 2/783, Report, Attack on the Italian Possessions in the Dodecanese, 1939.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² The National Archives, CAB 84/8/14, Plan for the Capture of the Dodecanese, 10 October 1939.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Gooch, p.451.

Tunisia.⁸²⁵ Therefore, the islands had a key strategic importance for Italy, especially with regard to the first four targets. Britain, on the other hand, had already assessed the importance of the islands during the Abyssinian Crisis in 1935.⁸²⁶ According to London, the Dodecanese were situated in a location that could influence Straits, the Balkans, Syria, Suez Canal, and Cyprus, all which were important for the British interests. So, the parties acknowledged the significance of the islands not only in relation to Turkey, but also in relation to the Mediterranean in the widest sense without hesitation.

London frequently stressed the possible problems that the islands would pose to British strategy and shipping in the Mediterranean if Italy entered the war.⁸²⁷ One of the reasons behind this foresight was the Italian possession of submarines in the Mediterranean the number of which was one hundred, more or less.⁸²⁸ Since a decisive part of this number was based on Leros, the naval base of the Dodecanese, the neutralization of this island was very important for the future of the war.⁸²⁹ Nearly all the plans upon which both Turkey and Britain agreed without conflict indicated the major two islands of the group, Rhodes and Leros as the first targets on the grounds that the major strength of the area laid in these islands although several other ones, like Kos, Stampalia, Kalimnos, and Scarpanto, were also fortified, yet their power could not be comparable to those of Rhodes and Leros.⁸³⁰

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ For more information about the importance of the islands for the Mediterranean balance of power, see Chapter 5.

⁸²⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/23739, Foreign Office Minutes (Mr. J. W. Nicholls), 25 August 1939.

⁸²⁸ The National Archives, CAB 84/8/14, Plan for the Capture of the Dodecanese, 10 October 1939.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ The National Archives, DEFE 2-783, Report, Attack on the Italian Possessions in the Dodecanese, 1939.

According to the officials, the capture of Leros and Rhodes was much more critical than that of the others, which could be occupied easily after the fall of the former two. In this respect, both these two islands needed to be occupied successively because control of only one of them without the other could be extremely hazardous since the strong naval and air bases of these islands had the power to damage the naval and air forces of the Allies in the region.⁸³¹ In this way, not only the control of the area would be handled, but also significant naval and air bases would be obtained, like the one of Porto Laki.⁸³² According to the plans, the use of the air bases in Turkey was the most appropriate option, owing to the proximity of the Turkish mainland to the islands, though they were serviceable only from April to October, in other words, apart from the winter months.⁸³³ Since the strategic value of the Dodecanese was obvious, this operation should have been initiated as soon as the Italians entered the war.⁸³⁴

In the light of this plan, both parties gathered information from the islands throughout the summer of 1939. In this process, cooperation was provided between the allies to the extent that the Turkish officials emphasized a thirty-page intelligence report that the British gave about the Dodecanese for the first time.⁸³⁵ Indeed, long reports about each island, from geographical features, like the sea and land conditions as well as the water supplies, to the current military intelligence were included in these folders,

⁸³¹ Ibid.

⁸³² Ibid.

⁸³³ Ibid.

⁸³⁴ The National Archives, DEFE 2/784, Attack on Italian Possessions in the Dodecanese Area: Preparatory Exercise, December 1939.

⁸³⁵ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-037/2, 15 June 1939.

from which the authorities determined the most suitable attack points.⁸³⁶ According to the monthly reports, the preparations in the region had begun to accelerate in the middle of the summer. For instance, while in June 1939, no major movements were detected in the islands; big maneuvers involving the coastal defense took place in July and August.⁸³⁷ In the month that the war started, on the other hand, the reports claimed that 40.000 Italian troops were stationed on the islands, even if this number was not confirmed.⁸³⁸

Despite the existence of disagreements about the details of an action on the Dodecanese, the parties agreed on the necessity of such an action in case of Italian involvement in the clash. As Turkey, Britain, and France progressed towards the Tripartite Pact that was discussed throughout the summer, Germany made an effort to prevent Turkey from such an initiative that would eventually place Ankara in the enemy camp.

Actually, Germany's stance in this respect began in May 1939, when the mutual declaration of Turkey and Britain was made. When the Italian Ambassador in Berlin explained the German position on Turkey in this period, he was complaining to Ciano, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, about the German pressure made on Italy concerning the necessity to assure the Turks in terms of the Italian intents in the

⁸³⁶ In order to see a good example of such reports, see Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 1-004/1-44, n.d.

⁸³⁷ The National Archives, HW41/113 Intelligence Report on the Italian Dodecanese, June 1939; HW41/114, Intelligence Report on the Italian Dodecanese, July 1939; HW 41/115, Intelligence Report on the Italian Dodecanese, August 1939.

⁸³⁸ The National Archives, FO 371/23825/2016, Telegram from Governor of Cyprus to Foreign Office, 8 September 1939. It should be noted that according to the 1936 population census of the Dodecanese, the total number of the population was 120.000.

Mediterranean, in order to hinder Ankara from getting much closer to Britain.⁸³⁹

According to the Germans, the major reasons for Turkey to approach to Britain were the fortifications in the islands and the Italian actions in Albania.⁸⁴⁰ Since Turkey would play a key role in the coming war because of its strategic location, Turkey should not have been sided with the British, in other words, should have been earned.⁸⁴¹ Obviously, this German attitude towards Turkey led to problems between Berlin and Rome.

One of such problem between the parties came to the surface in the subsequent days, again in regard to the Dodecanese. It was related to a proposal of von Papen, the German Ambassador in Ankara, who had advised his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ribbentrop, to decrease the number of Italian troops in Albania, and to offer two Dodecanesian islands within Turkish territorial waters to Turkey in order to relieve Ankara, even if Berlin had refused this proposal in return.⁸⁴² Mustafa Aydın suggests that this offer included Kastellorizo together with other islets.⁸⁴³ However, the mentioned source, which is the memoirs of von Papen, does not cite the names of the islands related to the offer.⁸⁴⁴

This proposal about the islands, though rejected, continued to be on the negotiation table for a while, yet without the names of the islands in particular. In this respect, a correspondence between von Papen and Ribbentrop is interesting since it

⁸³⁹ I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, Ottava Serie, 1935-39, Volume XI, Gennaio-Maggio, 1939 (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 2007), pp.714-715.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

⁸⁴² Franz von Papen, *Memoirs* (London: Andre Deutch, 1952), p.447.

⁸⁴³ Mustafa Aydın, “World War II and Turkey, 1939-1945,” in *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1919-2006, Facts and Analyses with Documents*, ed. by Baskın Oran (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2010), p.244.

⁸⁴⁴ Von Papen states “I also suggested the cession to Turkey of two small and unimportant islands in the Dodecanese which actually lay within Turkish territorial waters.” *Memoirs*, p.447.

displays that von Papen and Turkish officials carried on talks about the islands and also that those discussions caused trouble in German-Italian relations. In this sense, on 7 September 1939, while Ribbentrop seemed to be angry with von Papen, who had continued to discuss the Turkish-Italian relations with the Turks, thus leading to the problems with Rome,⁸⁴⁵ von Papen tried to persuade his Minister that it was Saraçoğlu who had brought up the matter, saying “the question of the uninhabited islands located in the three-mile zone of the Dodecanese, on which it had never been possible to reach any agreement with Italy.”⁸⁴⁶ It is important to note that within a couple of days, von Papen emphasized again the necessity of making some proposals to Turkey, in order to detach Ankara from London and Paris.⁸⁴⁷

The understanding of the Germans, specifically von Papen, did not yield any positive results. The treaty that legally connected Turkey to Britain and France was signed on 19 October 1939, after the beginning of the war. The treaty addressed the Mediterranean and how the parties would assist each other in case of a clash in the region. Above all, the substance of the treaty, the clause concerning the Dodecanese, which was regulated by the third article of the secret supplementary military agreement, stated that the Allies agreed to make the islands ineffective in the case of a clash with Italy or in the case of a situation which would necessitate the implementation of the Pact’s clauses,⁸⁴⁸ especially the ones targeting the assistance in the Mediterranean if a conflict arose.

⁸⁴⁵ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, vol.VIII, *The War Years*, “no.16,” 7 September 1939 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954), p.15.

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, “no.28,” 8 September 1939, pp.27-28.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, “no.69,” 14 September 1939, pp.66-67.

⁸⁴⁸ For the full text of the secret military convention, see Soysal, pp.604-607. “*Madde 3. Bağlı Taraflar, bugünkü Andlaşmanın hükümlerini uygulama alanine koymağı gerektiren ve İtalya’nın*

The same clause also emphasized the Turkish control of the operation together with the naval and air support of the parties,⁸⁴⁹ showing that the confusion over the means for the action had been solved closer to the idea of Turkish officials. However, it also should be stated that the blockade of the islands was to be handled and the domination in the air and sea was to be obtained “within the possibilities.”⁸⁵⁰

This clause about the Dodecanese was expected to come into force with the entrance of Italy into the war, about which the Pact foresaw mutual assistance during a clash in the Mediterranean region⁸⁵¹ as the backbone of the entire agreement. As could be seen, the major concern of Turkey was still the Mediterranean, based on the Dodecanese dynamic during the date of the Pact. But other security concerns for Turkey had also risen at that time, as reflected in the document. For example, the agreement also emphasized the reciprocal support in the Balkans, which would be a significant dynamic of Turkish diplomacy and military strategy, by the end of the year.⁸⁵²

This clause linked the Turkish contribution to the Allied military aid to be sent to Turkey, which would be one of the excuses that Ankara would use during the war, in

düşmanca bir hareketini ortaya koyan bir uyuşmazlıkta, Oniki Adayı en kısa zamanda tehlikesiz bir duruma getirmenin yararı üzerine anlaşmışlardır. Böylece girişilecek hareket, öbür iki Bağutlu Devletin ayırabilecekleri deniz ve hava kuvvetlerinin işbirliği ile, Türk kuvvetleri tarafından yönetilecektir. Denizde ve havada üstünlüğün sağlanmasına söz konusu Adaların dışarı ile bağlantısının kesilmesine ve oradaki garnizonların hareketsiz duruma getirilmesine ilişkin önlemler, olanaklı ölçüde, bu harekattan önce alınacaktır. Bu hareket için kabul olunacak planlar (emir ve komutanın düzenlenmesi; hareketin gelişen aşamaları ve bunların hedefleri; ayrılacak kuvvetler; gerekli ulaşım araçlarının toplanması ve kullanıma hazır tutulması; gemiden çıkarma eyleminin korunması vb. işbu Askersel Sözleşmenin yürürlüğe konulmasından sonra ilgili Genelkurmaylar arasında yapılacak toplantılarda saptanacaktır.”

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁵¹ In order to see the clauses about the Mediterranean and specifically the Dodecanese, see Soysal, pp.600-609.

⁸⁵² Ibid. p.593.

order not to enter any conflict, referring to the inadequacy of the military facilitation.⁸⁵³

Another excuse Turkey made during the war in this respect was to refer to a specific clause in one of the additional protocols through which the parties had accepted that Turkey could not be forced to participate in any activity having a possibility to push Ankara towards a clash with the Soviet Union,⁸⁵⁴ about which the Turkish officials had major concerns.

Indeed, when Turkey was making calculations mainly about Italy after the above-mentioned declarations of the parties in May and June, the Soviet Union had begun to appear as a diplomatic problem in the northern part of the country. Although the Russians were carrying out negotiations with Britain and France for assistance, seeming closer to the Allied side; the signing of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in other words the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union, on 23 August 1939 was a major development for the whole world as it was for Turkey.⁸⁵⁵ While Turkey had come closer to Britain and France with the concerns of aggression in the Mediterranean, the idea of Turkish foreign policy was to handle the relationship with Britain, France, and the Soviet Union harmoniously, with the hope that those three powers would be on the same side of the equation.⁸⁵⁶ However, with the nonaggression pact between Russia and Germany, Turkish foreign policy entered into a difficult phase in which it had to take also the Soviet pressure into consideration, in addition to the Italian and German threat.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵³ Ibid., p.606.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.596-597.

⁸⁵⁵ Fahir Armaoğlu, "İkinci Dünya Harbinde Türkiye," *SBF Dergisi* 13, no.2 (1958), pp.145-146.

⁸⁵⁶ Aydın, pp.245-246.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid.

Obviously, these necessities revealed themselves during the visit of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, who went to Moscow in September 1939, with the hope of reaching an understanding with the Soviets. While the aim of Turkey was to maintain the Turkish-Soviet friendship without undermining the needs of the Tripartite Pact that would be signed soon, the Russian interests lay in the neutrality of Turkey, parallel with the Germans' intent, as well as in the desire to change the regime of the Straits, which should have been controlled by the Turks and the Soviets together,⁸⁵⁸ different from the understanding of Montreux, which had actually been a turning point for the Turkish-Russian relations.

Owing to these distinct goals of the parties and the Turkish resolution for the Straits, Saraçoğlu's Moscow visit did not yield any positive results. It should be noted that when the attempts for a mutual Russian-Turkish understanding failed, the Second World War had already started with the attack of the Nazis to Poland on 1 September. Therefore, as soon as the negotiations were terminated and Saraçoğlu left Moscow, Turkey, Britain, and France signed the above-mentioned Tripartite Pact in October 1939, the main clauses of which had already been decided. The attention of the Turkish officials specifically on the clause through which they declared that Ankara would not implement any of these articles if they might lead to a clash with the Soviet Union, reflected the situation of Turkish foreign policy well at that time, as dealing with more than one problem.

The negotiations that took place between the Allies in order to constitute a detailed plan based on Tripartite Pact in the last months of 1939 and in the first half of the 1940; in other words, before the entrance of Italy into the war, indicate this point,

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid. pp.246-248.

too. When the Turkish, British, and French military officials met in Ankara for the first time after the signing of the Pact, the Allies discussed the Mediterranean based on the Dodecanese, the Balkans both based on German, Bulgarian, and Russian threat, and the Eastern line of Turkey based on the Russian threat to Caucasus. However, despite this complex situation of Turkish foreign and security policy, when the British and French officials asked whether the Dodecanese was still a question of primary importance, Fevzi Çakmak's response to his colleagues was "yes."⁸⁵⁹

In spite of this importance, a more detailed operation plan based on the military protocol concerning the Aegean Archipelago did not materialize during these months. The approaches of France and Britain, which began to differentiate from those of Turkey in this period, were significant in this sense. That is to say, while the French were interested mostly in the Balkan frontiers, thus equating the Dodecanese rather with the uninterrupted Mediterranean naval traffic; the main endeavor of the British became Egypt and Palestine in the Middle East. They tried not to deal with the Dodecanese to a great extent in order not to alienate the Italians, who could have been still drawn towards the Allies, or may have remained neutral at least, according to London.⁸⁶⁰

The desire of Turkey, despite reflecting the neutralization of the islands as one of the backbones of the Turkish strategy that sought to free southwestern Anatolia from aggression, was rigidly tied to the military aid that the British and French would send.⁸⁶¹ The Turkish stance that would continue until the end of the war concerning the military aid began to emerge gradually. Therefore, it is no surprising to see that the negotiation process after October 1939 was not conclusive regarding the Dodecanesian operation.

⁸⁵⁹ Brock, p.296.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.297-305.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., p.334.

The divergence of opinions among the Allies came to the surface in more concrete terms during the conference held in Aleppo in March 1940. The reports of the meeting suggest that the sessions were not in a friendly tone due to the Turkish attitude towards the plans.⁸⁶² The assumption of Turkey in terms of an Italian attack from the Aegean and a Bulgarian one from Thrace with the active support of the former had evolved into a more complicated one with the above-mentioned pact between Russia and Germany. The worst scenario for Turkey had become the attack of Italy, Bulgaria, Germany, and the Soviet Russia at the same time.⁸⁶³ In this sense, the British and French officials were ready to discuss the means of defense, especially against an assault that would be directed by Russia, Bulgaria, and Germany from the Balkans, specifically with regard to the security of the Black Sea, the Straits and the Aegean Sea.⁸⁶⁴

In terms of the Aegean, on the other hand, the British and French commanders assumed that the main clash would be in the northern part of the sea where there might be attacks directed by the German submarines and air forces.⁸⁶⁵ Turkey, while ready to discuss these assumptions, was uncomfortable with the changing attitude of the Allied powers towards Italy. The problem for Turkey was the fact that all the Allied officials based their assumptions on the Italian neutrality, which was only one alternative.⁸⁶⁶ After the emphasis of this fact, while the Turks tried to discuss all the possibilities based on the Italian neutrality, friendship, and hostility since the position of Italy was significant for Turkey's future, the British and French delegates opposed the desire of

⁸⁶² The National Archives, WO 106/2049, Staff Conversation with the Turks, Meeting at Aleppo, 8 April 1940.

⁸⁶³ The National Archives, WO 106/2049, Telegram from General Headquarters, Middle East, to War Office, 25 March 1940.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid.

Turkey, through the enforcement of the discussion based solely on the Italian neutrality.⁸⁶⁷ When the Turkish delegates insisted on the cases based on the Italian belligerency, the conference reached at an impasse:

The Turks in effect saying the military convention was signed five months ago. You British and French have done nothing to carry out your obligations until now when you propose to discuss only one hypothesis, and that hypothesis by no means the most important. Our instructions from the Turkish government are that we insist that all other hypothesis be discussed and especially that of a hostile Italy. Unless the British and French agree to this, then the conference cannot go on.⁸⁶⁸

The answer of the British and French were somewhat evasive stating that they were actually ready to discuss the other hypotheses if they had the necessary details and instructions from their governments.⁸⁶⁹ Therefore, they should have discussed the Italian neutrality case until the parties had the necessary permission from their own authorities.⁸⁷⁰ Although the parties decided to continue to the negotiations in this way until the messages came from the capitals, it is seen that the Turkish officials constantly reiterated their determination to discuss the Italian belligerency, annoying their British and French counterparts.⁸⁷¹

The British and French officials accused the Turks on the grounds that no conversations had been made about this demand of Turkish delegates concerning the

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

plans on the Italian belligerency, during the negotiations in Ankara.⁸⁷² The Turks rejected this statement and claimed that the Allies had decided to negotiate every prospect when they were in Turkey, emphasizing that they had already prepared seven scenarios.⁸⁷³

One of the most important among them was against the simultaneous attack by the Germans, Russians, Bulgarians, and Italians, based on the Dodecanese assaulting the Mediterranean coast of Turkey at the same time.⁸⁷⁴ The significance of the Italian entrance into war with an effective use of the islands stemmed not just from the possibility of an assault to the Aegean coasts, but from the impacts of the islands on the Balkan defense, as well as on the route to the Suez Canal. The Allied position may have been hardened through the islands that could impair the shipping and the security of the Mediterranean, according to the Turkish officials.⁸⁷⁵ As a result of the tough Turkish position together with these logical reasons, all the parties agreed to discuss the belligerency of Italy on the basis of the Dodecanese Islands, overcoming the deadlock in Aleppo.

The discussions of an operation on the islands did not differ from the previous ones in terms of the British and French naval and aerial domination followed by a Turkish landing. However, the Allies had hitches and conflicts among them even in this agreed plan of action. For example, in one of the conversations on this topic, the Turks were questioned about their probable contribution to the naval operation regarding their

⁸⁷² Ibid.

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

ships.⁸⁷⁶ Although General Asım Gündüz stated that the Turkish navy was not as extensive as to be utilized both in the Black Sea and Marmara in addition to the Mediterranean, the British commanders persisted in seeking out such probability, about which the Turkish officials emphasized the third article of the military convention that encumbered the parties with specific tasks.⁸⁷⁷

When the Aleppo Conference ended, the relationship among the parties was still far from satisfactory. First of all, from June 1939 to March 1940, although the Dodecanese were always on the top of the agenda, similar themes were discussed again and again with still-existent problems. From the routes of transportation to the division of labor in the operation had continued to be a source of tension since June 1939. It is important to note that throughout this epoch, the interests of the parties clashed with each other occasionally since their concerns had focused on the diverse points.

The first half of the 1940 showed that the Turks were also trying to deal with a tough ambiguity about who could attack to its borders. Many options existed in this respect; but the Dodecanese occupied a role within every scenario of the Turks, who were determined to resist any attack made against its territory. As can be seen, since the future seemed uncertain, Turkey was in a position not only to think about how it could resist an attack from the Dodecanese, but also how to deal with a plan to neutralize the islands conversely at the same time. Yet, as the obscurity in the conditions would change with the second half of 1940, the Turkish position both towards the Dodecanese and towards war in general would become much more concrete, especially with regard to its non-belligerency.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

On the Shores of the Dangerous Sea:
Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Aegean, 1940-1945

A month after the Allies negotiated the war plans over the Balkans, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea in Aleppo, the Nazi Germany attacked France. It was shocking for the whole world that the Nazis, who began their march against France in May 1940, were walking in the streets of Paris in June 1940, without much difficulty.⁸⁷⁸ Actually, before the fall of France, the Nazis and the Soviets had already taken control of Poland, the Baltic States, Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium together or separately, showing that Berlin and Moscow could achieve rapid progress within a short span of time. The situation further changed in June with the entrance of Italy into the war, even if as a retarded and opportunistic move, which could come only after the fall of France became obvious.⁸⁷⁹ This period, from the beginning of the defeat of France and the Italian entrance to war, until the German attack on the Soviets with Operation Barbarossa in June 1941,⁸⁸⁰ became a remarkably stressful epoch for Turkish diplomacy, which dealt with the Soviet pressure, the German threat, the Italian involvement, and the Allied problems at the same time.

During the summer of 1940, all eyes were turned on Turkey owing to the Italian belligerency, since the war had expanded toward the Mediterranean. This was one of the requirements for Turkish belligerency based on the conditions of the Tripartite Pact.

⁸⁷⁸ Kissinger, p.332-333.

⁸⁷⁹ David Abulafia, *The Great Sea, A Human History of the Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.605.

⁸⁸⁰ Actually, the cooperation between the Soviet Union and Germany was signaling discontent by the summer of 1940, specifically regarding the Balkans and the Straits. Yet the actual clash would come in 1941, as would be seen below.

While the British and French insisted on Turkish participation based on the pact after the Italian involvement, the Germans warned Turkey not to join the Allies.⁸⁸¹ Indeed, while Turkey was faced with the German threat in the Balkans, there was also a Soviet factor, about which rumors spread in terms of a possible Russian attack on Bulgaria, then on the Straits.⁸⁸² In addition, within the same month that Italy entered the war, the Soviets declared that they would recognize the Italian domination in the Mediterranean if Rome would do the same for the Russians in the Black Sea,⁸⁸³ displaying the dangerous situation Turkey faced.

Therefore, despite the spread of the war to the Mediterranean, Turkey decided to be non-belligerent, implementing the second protocol of the Pact through which Ankara had pronounced that any clause of this alliance could not put Turkey against the Soviet Union, which could attack to Turkey in the case of its belligerency.⁸⁸⁴ After all, Turkey had made an alliance not only with Britain but also with France, which had signed an armistice with the Nazis after its speedy defeat, strengthening the diplomatic hand of Ankara. According to the Turkish officials, since France was absent from the scene as a party to the Tripartite Pact and a guarantor of Turkish security and since Britain did not have the capability to perform its responsibilities for Turkey on its own, Ankara did not have to carry out its duty to enter the war automatically.⁸⁸⁵

Indeed, the Turkish officials would repeat to what extent Britain kept its promises especially with regard to the assistance of arms and munitions together with the necessary credits throughout the war as a reason to be non-belligerent. In reality,

⁸⁸¹ Aydın, p.251.

⁸⁸² Ibid.

⁸⁸³ Armaoğlu, p.150.

⁸⁸⁴ Deringil, pp.115-120.

⁸⁸⁵ Aydın, p.251.

those complaints about the inadequacy of the military assistance had begun before the Italian belligerency in the sense that even at the Aleppo Conference; the Turkish officials stated in the face of the Allies that even after five-six month of the Pact, British and French had done nothing to meet their obligations.⁸⁸⁶

The idea of controlling the Mediterranean had led Mussolini to take Italy into the war with offensives first against France in June 1940, second against British Somalia from Italian East Africa in August, third against Egypt from Libya, and fourth against Greece from Albania in October, although the resources and capabilities of the Italian military and economy were not sufficient to handle those tasks at the same time.⁸⁸⁷ With the action of Rome in Greece in October, just after the signs of German domination in Romania, this time the third article of the Tripartite Pact seem to have been activated based on the Turkish assurances of assistance to Rumania and Greece, as the countries of the Balkan Entente.

Indeed, throughout the negotiations that took place in 1939, Turkey had promised to intervene in the situation in the Balkans in the case of aggression as the documents of the Turkish General Staff designate.⁸⁸⁸ However, with the change in the course of events in Greece in October 1940, Turkey did not make any concession about its stance based on being outside of the war similar to the understanding in June 1940. Deringil stresses that this time the British did not insist on the Turkish belligerency since they accepted the fact that the Turkish declaration of war could not bring an additional

⁸⁸⁶ The National Archives, WO 106/2049, Telegram from General Headquarters, Middle East, to War Office, 25 March 1940.

⁸⁸⁷ Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, The Italians, and the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.38-39.

⁸⁸⁸ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 3-026/4-5, 24 June 1939.

asset but burden to themselves in this state of affairs,⁸⁸⁹ which even the British Prime Minister, Churchill described “as a period of disaster for the Allies.”⁸⁹⁰ It should be stated that the British understanding about Turkish belligerency would show occasional mutability as the situation in the Balkans and the Mediterranean changed.

During this period, the Russians and Germans also paid attention to Turkey. According to Moscow and Berlin, Turkey needed to be freed from its responsibilities to Britain, by joining hands with Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan, and Italy.⁸⁹¹ However, despite their formulations in terms of attracting Turkey to their side, military and diplomatic actions against Ankara were also discussed if the Turks rejected a possible alliance with them.⁸⁹² In other words, Turkey’s relationship to the Soviets and the Germans resembled a razor’s edge in this period.

Actually, putting the stance of these powers towards Turkey aside, the own relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union was also complicated, in other words, on the verge of decay, at that time. This fact could also be observed smoothly from the meeting that took place between Molotov and Ribbentrop in Berlin in November 1940. On the one hand, the parties could discuss the abovementioned desires to take Turkey on their sides, or to take action against it. On the other hand, the Germans were anxious about the Russian claims on the Straits, in terms of their desire to gain bases and a new passage regime, and on Bulgaria, in terms of giving guarantees since Berlin had formulated these areas as the German sphere of influence while the Russians

⁸⁸⁹ Deringil, p.126.

⁸⁹⁰ Warren K. Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, vol.1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.103.

⁸⁹¹ Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie (ed.), *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office* (Washington: Department of State Publication, 1948), p.257.

⁸⁹² Ibid.

were likewise uncomfortable with the possible Nazi domination in the Balkans.⁸⁹³ This clash of interest between the parties which could be seen clearly in 1940 ended up with the German attack on Russia in 1941, changing the dynamics of the war thereafter. However, in the existing conditions, Turkey was in a tough position in which its borders including Thrace, western Anatolia, southern Anatolia vis-à-vis Vichy controlled Syria, and Caucasus, were under the threat at all times.

After this general narrative of war for the Turkish position in the changing conditions, the questions should be asked: What was the situation in the Dodecanese? What was the relationship between the mainland and the islands that had led Turkey to join the British camp in 1939 in the condition of Italian belligerency? The first answer to this question is that Turkey had nullified the projects foreseeing the capture of the Dodecanese since Ankara had declared its non-combatant position after the Italian belligerency. But, despite the Turkish non-belligerency, the control of the warring Italy on the islands just facing the Turkish territory became another element of anxiety for Turkey.

Putting the stress about the possible use of the islands in relation to Anatolia as inherited from the previous epochs aside, Turkey had to be faced with the increasing incidents and clashes in the region which could not be ignored from a geographic point of view, based on war and blockade after June 1940. The blockade that the British air and naval forces implemented in the Aegean Sea in order to cut the ties of the Dodecanese with the Italian mainland was significant, because the efforts to prevent the ships and the tankers from reaching the Archipelago were leading to retaliation of the Italian forces. For instance, in an incident occurred in July 1940, after the British forces

⁸⁹³ Jelavich, pp.230-232.

sank an Italian tanker carrying gasoline and lubricating oil to the islands, an Italian air attack against the Royal Navy had led to an open battle near the Dodecanese.⁸⁹⁴

Apart from the conflicts stemming from the blockade, the British forces also conducted occasional raids against the air and naval bases of fortified islands, such as Rhodes, Leros, and Stampalia, although the success of these actions is questionable due to the air power of Italy in the Mediterranean through its bases, like the ones on the mainland, Sicily, the Pantelleria, Libya,, and the Dodecanese.⁸⁹⁵ In short, after June 1940, there were clashes around the islands which were just next to Turkish territory.

Despite the clashes, however, Britain did not undertake a thorough operation against the Dodecanese during 1940. London had shelved the Dodecanesian campaign as a result of the Turkish non-belligerency in 1940, and in the conditions of this year; it could not undertake an operation to capture the islands owing to scarce resources. Nevertheless, the Aegean part of the Mediterranean remained significant for the British since the bases on these islands were on the way to Cyprus, Egypt, Malta and Crete, which were either important colonies or bases for Britain.

After the Italian attack on Greece in October, this importance of the islands further increased owing to their proximity to Greek mainland, to the other islands of the Archipelago, as well as to the Straits, as a point of connection. As a result, the Greek campaign of Italy brought tougher British policies towards the Aegean, bringing concrete influences on the Turkish position towards the region.

One of these impacts was the cessation of the traffic between the islands and the Turkish mainland as a result of the British efforts to implement a stricter blockade in the

⁸⁹⁴ *The New York Times*, 1 August 1940.

⁸⁹⁵ *The New York Times*, 6 October 1940, 11 August 1940.

Aegean in order to isolate the islands as well as of the insecure conditions for shipping. According to the diplomatic documents, British officials made several suggestions to their Turkish colleagues, like prohibiting Turks from going to the islands, the rigorous control of ships in terms of their cargo, and the punishment of people who did not comply with restrictions.⁸⁹⁶ Parallel to these suggestions, it is seen that the Turkish General Staff first gave orders to suppress the smuggling and tried to control the traffic in the region by opening contraband offices in the coastal areas of western Anatolia.⁸⁹⁷ The next step would be the total prohibition of shipping with an order that prevented Turkish ships from sailing in foreign waters.⁸⁹⁸

Britain, which was highly sensitive about the traffic between the Dodecanese and Turkey throughout 1940 and 1941, used several means in order to check the efficiency of those kinds of measures. For example, the contact between the people of Rhodes and the British officials seems important since they were providing information about the latest dispatches from Anatolia.⁸⁹⁹ In one such instance, the Consul of Greece on Rhodes stressed that the last food supplies had arrived to the islands three or four months earlier, after which the transactions had been stopped.⁹⁰⁰ In addition to these inquiries about the Turkish traffic to the Aegean islands, Britain carried out intelligence activities in Anatolia in a way that British spies watched the major cities and towns facing the

⁸⁹⁶ The National Archives, FO 195/2468, Telegram from Lord Halifax, Foreign Office to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Angora, 30 November 1940.

⁸⁹⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Ministry of Economic Warfare to Foreign Office, 11 January 1941.

⁸⁹⁸ The Turkish ships could sail only with the special decrees thereafter. An example of this could be seen in TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30.10.0.0/169.176..5, 2 February 1942; and 30.10.0.0/169.176..39, 27 July 1942.

⁸⁹⁹ The National Archives, FO 195/2468, Telegram from S. O. (I) Istanbul to S. O. (I) Mediterranean, 7 December 1940.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

islands, like İzmir, Bodrum, Marmaris, and even Ayvalık in the north.⁹⁰¹ By November 1941, British spies were still searching for contraband in the coastal regions and were concluding about the absence of traffic despite telegrams coming from Rhodes about the demand for commerce.⁹⁰²

The British blockade in the Aegean Sea had both the aim of isolating the islands and cutting help that would go to Greece where Italy was experiencing difficult times. Indeed, the efforts of the Allies were successful in the first three months of the Greek campaign, at least with regard to the insulation of the islands. The news about the Italian islands in the Aegean Sea indicated that since the dispatches from Italy and Turkey were either obstructed or prohibited, both the military and civilian condition in the islands deteriorated, leading to an expectation of surrender on the side of the Allies.⁹⁰³ The major problem of the islands was an acute food shortage, owing to which even a revolt among the Italian soldiers was expected.⁹⁰⁴ According to the intelligence documents, the Italian authorities in the capital, who were aware of these problems on the islands, were thinking about ways to adopt peaceful non-belligerency particularly for the islands in order to get rid of the difficulties stemming from the blockade.⁹⁰⁵

The reality behind this claim, specifically about the Italian effort to make the islands non-belligerent in order to overcome the blockade problem is questionable. However, even the probability of the surrender of the Italian *Possedimento* due to the

⁹⁰¹ The National Archives, FO 195/2468, Telegram from British Consulate General (Symirna) to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), 12 December 1940.

⁹⁰² The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 23 November 1941.

⁹⁰³ *The New York Times*, 30 November 1940.

⁹⁰⁴ The National Archives, FO 195/36746, Foreign Office Minutes, 21 December 1940.

⁹⁰⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Report, Dodecanese Islands- Economic Conditions and Morale by Director of Naval Intelligence, 13 February 1941.

acute conditions had revealed another discussion in Foreign Office, concerning the Turkish foreign policy in relation to the Dodecanese. That was closely related to the scenario about the possible Italian internment to Turkey.⁹⁰⁶ The problem about such surrender, according to the British diplomats, was Turkey's eventual response, which was uncertain at that time.⁹⁰⁷

Thus, London decided to put pressure on Ankara to advance the transition of the islands to Britain, in case of the actualization of such surrender.⁹⁰⁸ Turkey accepted in the subsequent months that the Dodecanese would be under the reign of Britain until the war came to an end. But, a much more important issue than the reconcilable attitude of the Turkish officials in this respect was the fact that these rumors and the intelligences about the Italian surrender of the Dodecanese to Turkey resulted in excitement and dismay in the British political circles to the degree that long conversations took place in the Foreign Office. Although Turkey did not seem to stir up problems and although Britain was determined to hold the islands at least until the end of the war, the possibility

⁹⁰⁶ It should be stated that the British officials use the specific term "internment" in several documents. The fifth part of the Hague Convention of 1907, which lays out the rules of war, describes internment as follows: "Art. 11. A neutral Power which receives on its territory troops belonging to the belligerent armies shall intern them, as far as possible, at a distance from the theatre of war. It may keep them in camps and even confine them in fortresses or in places set apart for this purpose. It shall decide whether officers can be left at liberty on giving their parole not to leave the neutral territory without permission, Art. 12. In the absence of a special convention to the contrary, the neutral Power shall supply the interned with the food, clothing, and relief required by humanity. At the conclusion of peace the expenses caused by the internment shall be made good. Art. 13. A neutral Power which receives escaped prisoners of war shall leave them at liberty. If it allows them to remain in its territory it may assign them a place of residence. The same rule applies to prisoners of war brought by troops taking refuge in the territory of a neutral Power." For the full text, see, The Avalon Project, "Laws of War," http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague05.asp (accessed June 3, 2014). It should be emphasized that the term of internment was occasionally used interchangeably with the term "surrender," in the British correspondence.

⁹⁰⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Foreign Office, 21 January 1941.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

of the surrender led to a series of correspondence about the future status of the Dodecanese.⁹⁰⁹

Based on these reports, the major reason behind this discussion seems to have been the British concern about the balance between Turkey and Greece in the sense that while the latter was a warring state on the side of the Allies, the former was a nonbelligerent yet strategic and cooperative country, which might participate in the war in the future.⁹¹⁰ Therefore, any quarrel between these two powers over the Dodecanese could be detrimental to the course of events in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean in the existing conditions. At this point, it should be noted that after 1940, the “fate of the Dodecanese” would frequently be on the table, as a subject that Turkish foreign policy had to deal with. This sovereignty issue would be discussed throughout the war and thereafter, as the next chapter will show in a much more detailed way.

While the future of the Dodecanese was debated for the first time during the war at this time, with a conclusion of the necessity for the British domination on the islands if the Italians surrendered them, another factor arose nearly at the same time. This was about the British foresight for a potential German intervention into the Greek campaign of Italy, owing to the fact that Greece had played a “star role in the Mediterranean” since the beginning of the operation.⁹¹¹ According to the Foreign Office, the Nazis were not

⁹⁰⁹ For more information about these discussions, see the documents in the folder of FO 371/29932.

⁹¹⁰ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, 4 January 1941, 2 January 1941.

⁹¹¹ *The New York Times*, 3 November 1940.

only planning to intervene in the immersed campaign on Greece but also “beginning to take an interest in the Dodecanese,”⁹¹² owing to the acute Italian situation there.

The reports of the same institution together with those of the military suggested that the fifty percent of the total German forces available in Sicily might be spared for the reinforcement of the islands.⁹¹³ Therefore, it was strategically logical to capture the Dodecanese before a German arrival.⁹¹⁴ Once the British took the Dodecanese, they could control the northern Aegean Islands, like Mytilene and Lemnos, and prevent the Axis traffic in the Aegean, especially in terms of shipping oil from Romania through the Straits, and could constitute a circle in the vicinity of Greece,⁹¹⁵ showing the importance of the islands for the region. However, if the British could not capture the Dodecanese, together with the German invasion of Greece, it would be difficult for the Allies to hold Suda Bay on Crete, after which the activities of the Royal Navy would be limited only to the southeastern part of the Mediterranean.⁹¹⁶ For these reasons, British officials began to reinterpret the earlier plans to capture the Dodecanese, yet within different parameters from those of 1939.

One of the most important differences at this time was the stance of Turkey, which had declared its non-belligerent position. Therefore, during 1941, Turkey would not directly participate in any occupational plan concerning the Dodecanese, on the

⁹¹² The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Foreign Office to Sir. M. Palairret (Athens), Foreign Office Minutes, 20 January 1940.

⁹¹³ Ibid.

⁹¹⁴ It is important to note that the British consideration of the strategic points in the Mediterranean did not just focus on the Dodecanese. For instance, Sardinia seems important strategically. However, the British officials defined the capture of the Sardinia as a dream at that point since the Germans were strong in the area and the British forces that could be devoted to a Mediterranean campaign was limited. For more information for the strategic consideration about the Mediterranean, see FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 20-21 January 1940.

⁹¹⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 21 January 1940.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

contrary to its position in the previous years. As a matter of fact, whether Britain was willing to include Ankara in its Aegean plans was another question.

Tamkin argues that beginning with 1941, the Allied position towards Turkey was complicated. While Churchill criticized Ankara on the grounds that it did not fulfill its responsibilities, he also declared that the neutrality of Turkey was also a contribution for the Allied situation in the Mediterranean.⁹¹⁷ In this complex understanding of the Turks, however, the British program about Turkey focused rather on the Balkan front, through which the Turkish army should have assisted Greece and Yugoslavia,⁹¹⁸ in the Mediterranean region, rather than the much discussed Dodecanese operation, about which Britain was making plans. It can be argued that the reason why the British did not consider Turkey a landing power for the Dodecanese at least on paper while it did so for the Balkan Front was similar to the approach of the Foreign Office about the previous rumors of Italian surrender. In other words, London did not want to discuss a Dodecanese operation involving in Turkey, because it was a fragile matter for Greek national aspirations, and because the Greeks were fighting tough on the side of the Allies at that time.

The Turkish officials did not like the way that Britain approached the issue of the Dodecanese. Although Turkey was not a belligerent country, and had no intention of interference, officials in Ankara had made diplomatic contacts with both the British and the Greeks to discuss several conditions regarding a prospective campaign. Ankara's foremost reservation was about the soldiers that the British intended to use in the campaign, because if this contingent that would actualize the occupation was composed

⁹¹⁷ Tamkin, p.40.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid, pp.41-45.

of the Greeks citizens, it would pose problems about the sovereignty of the islands after the war.⁹¹⁹

As a result, Turkey officially demanded that Britain should have undertaken the capture without the help of the Greeks.⁹²⁰ Even if Britain stated that the Greeks would be utilized only for military matters, Turkey emphasized that a separation of the occupational powers from the administrative one was almost impossible.⁹²¹ It is seen that the Turkish authorities began to have anxieties about the sovereignty of the islands that the British and the Greeks were extremely sensitive about.

However, the fears of Turkey did not materialize since the Middle Eastern Command of the Allied Powers frequently changed the operation plans. At the beginning, the intention of the Allies had been to capture all the islands in the group; but, since the Germans had reached the Dodecanese quickly, dropped mines in the Suez Canal, and accordingly the Allied parties did not have enough material and manpower to handle the operation, the plan was abandoned.⁹²²

Thereafter, the discussions concentrated on the capture of the important islands rather than the whole group because dealing with the smaller islands was unnecessarily time-consuming, since they did not have military capacity.⁹²³ Despite the above-mentioned deliberations, the much anticipated mission did not take place, due to the primacy of other arenas in the Middle East.

⁹¹⁹ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1941.

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

⁹²¹ Ibid.

⁹²² The National Archives, WO 106/3260, Report by Foreign Office, The Dodecanese Question June 1940- January 1942, 17 February 1942.

⁹²³ The National Archives, WO 106/3260, War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Attack on the Dodecanese 14 January 1941; Attack on the Dodecanese, Note by the Secretary, 13 January 1941.

Instead, what the forces of the Royal Navy did undertake in the region was several raids against Rhodes, without any conclusive success, and thorough attempt against Kastellorizo, leading a battle lasted for days.⁹²⁴ Although raids against the islands in which an important amount of Italian troops were stationed like Leros, Rhodes, Kos, Stampalia, and Kalimnos, occasionally had taken place since the beginning of the war; the action against Kastellorizo as a small island seemed surprising in a time scale that the little islands were being ignored. However, the cause behind the operation on Kastellorizo was related to its location and harbor facilities on the midway between Rhodes and Cyprus,⁹²⁵ as well as on the way towards the Syria from the Dodecanese.⁹²⁶

The invasion of Kastellorizo, which was called “Operation Abstention,” involved violent clashes between British and Italian ships as well as soldiers. While Britain landed on the island in the first day of the operation, after the clash between the forces, Italian troops seized Kastellorizo again within a couple of days, leading to casualties from the both sides.⁹²⁷ It is necessary emphasize that the operation of Kastellorizo had some local and general implications for Turkey regardless of the final result of the action.

Although Kastellorizo is small, it is the closest island to the Turkish mainland. Therefore, the local authorities followed the war between the Italian and British navies around Kastellorizo closely. If this proximity of the region and the separate sovereignties

⁹²⁴ The National Archives, WO 201/713, Report, Operation “Abstention,” 1 March 1941.

⁹²⁵ It should be stated that throughout the Second World War, Britain feared about a possible action against Cyprus and tried to keep the bases safe close to the island.

⁹²⁶ Churchill, *The Grande Alliance: The Second World War* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2002), p.1094.

⁹²⁷ The National Archives, WO 201/713, Report, Operation “Abstention,” 1 March 1941.

of the islets dependent on Kastellorizo are kept in mind, the problems about the maritime boundaries seemed to have been inevitable. During the battle, an incident occurred within Turkish territorial waters exemplifies this point well. According to the reports, several men from the bombing crew of Italy in a rubber boat took refuge on a Turkish islet near the island and a Turkish boat took them off from the islet.⁹²⁸ Thereafter, an Italian seaplane landed near the islet in order to take the crew. The Turkish boat had made for it, but, the British bombed the area.⁹²⁹

After the British bombardment, the boats fled to the Turkish coast, where the seaplane picked up the crew, to take them to Rhodes.⁹³⁰ The reporter states that the British forces could not intervene further due to the fact that these vessels were in Turkish territorial waters and then they disappeared beyond the gunshot range.⁹³¹ This story indicates that the zones of the war could not be separated with a clear line in the Aegean Sea, due to the natural and political geography of the area.

This problematic geography symbolizes an area that the Turkish officials always had to take two points of view into consideration. On the one hand, sudden violations of the Turkish territorial waters during the war emerged as a significant phenomenon that the Turkish authorities followed with attention. But it also should be stated that the situation of the Turkish territorial waters in the Aegean during the war was controversial because despite the caution that the Turkish officials showed for their borders, it was

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

⁹²⁹ Ibid.

⁹³⁰ Ibid.

⁹³¹ Ibid.

suggested that some secret British special forces directing raids against the Aegean islands after 1941 were operating near Güllük with implicit Turkish consent.⁹³²

Those Turkish indirect assistances to the Allies in the Aegean Sea, however, occurred to a greater extent during the major Dodecanesian campaign in 1943. But, except for the Turkish assistance to the Allied camp in the Aegean against the Axis, the reality was that the breach of Turkish territorial waters occasionally took place in the Aegean Sea, preoccupying the officials in the local areas and in Ankara. The same situation existed regarding the Turkish airspace about which reports emphasized the close flights and the surveillance activities by aircrafts the nationality of which were uncertain.⁹³³ These kinds of incidents were increasing during the clashes like the ones of Kastellorizo.

On the other hand, the war right next to the Turkish territory also had implications at the local level. For instance, during the operations in the Aegean, specifically around Kastellorizo, shells fell on the town of Kaş, leading to property damage and even injuries.⁹³⁴ Therefore, all the people in these towns were ordered to stay in shelters during the bombardments.⁹³⁵ That is to say, Turkey had to take some measures for the protection of its nationals living close to theater of war.

Yet, the ordinary measures of Turkey did not always yield results. For instance, in a serious incident that took place during 1942, the British bombed Muğla mistakenly, leading to the destruction of property in the town as well as to the death of a Turkish

⁹³² Gavin Mortimer, "Pirates of the Aegean," *World War II* 27, no.3 (Sep/Oct., 2012) , p.71.

⁹³³ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/51.332..28, 27 April 1940, 30..10.0.0/51.333..22, 3 June 1941.

⁹³⁴ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/89.590..15, 9 November 1943.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

citizen.⁹³⁶ After the incident, the British apologized to the Turkish state, stating that the intention of the British army had been the island facing the Turkish town and paid indemnity for the properties and the casualty.⁹³⁷ This incident is an example of two points. First, the above-mentioned geographical difficulty not only occasionally resulted in the violation of the Turkish territories, but also posed serious threat to these regions. Second, the islands had serious local implications in addition to the ones of foreign policy. Turkish people in the coastal areas lived on the edge of war, although Turkey did not participate actively in the clash.

But, it should be stated that the Turkish anxiety about the Aegean Sea were far beyond these considerations. The course of events in the summer of 1941 aggravated the Turkish security concerns towards the Balkans and the Aegean Sea. The Nazis gained the control of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, and then launched campaigns against Yugoslavia and Greece. The Axis occupation of Greece had some general implications for Turkish foreign policy. Thereafter, while the British rhetoric about the Turkish “leadership” in a possible Balkan front came to an end,⁹³⁸ it also legitimized the non-belligerency decision of Ankara, which had witnessed the total destruction of its neighbors in the lack of sufficient Allied support.⁹³⁹

Beyond these general implications, the significance of the German invasion was also related to the Turkish security concerns in the west. Apart from the Nazi existence in the Balkans, in other words, at the gate of the Thracian borders, the German campaign in the spring of 1941 had turned the Mediterranean, particularly the Aegean, into an

⁹³⁶ Ulvi Keser, *Yunanistan'ın Büyük Açlık Dönemi ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2008), p.371-373.

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ Tamkin, p.49.

⁹³⁹ Deringil, p.142.

Axis sea. The German occupation of Crete in May 1941, which would last until the end of the war was an important step in this sense since the island had harbor facilities on the route between the eastern and western Mediterranean.

What was much more important than Crete, especially for Turkey, was the fall of all the Aegean Islands located between Turkey and Greece to Axis control. The Italians, who were controlling the Dodecanese since 1912, occupied the Cyclades group together with Samos just facing Kuşadası in the spring of 1941. Nazi Germany occupied the other islands near the Anatolian mainland close to the Dardanelles; Chios, Lesbos, and Lemnos. Thasos and Samothrace, in the north close to Thrace, on the other hand, passed under the Bulgarian control. This meant the closure of the Aegean Sea to Allied traffic completely. In addition to the lost traffic in the region, the western coasts of Turkey, from the north to the south had come under the Axis control, removing the existing sovereignty distinction between islands near the northern and southern coasts of Turkey.

Several views considered this political geography of the Aegean as signaling Nazi preparation to occupy Turkey.⁹⁴⁰ Other evaluations, on the other hand, emphasized the German desire to reinforce its hand in the Balkans and in the Straits region vis-à-vis the Soviet Union with which it was on the eve of cracking, or to place itself “in a stronger position for an attack against Palestine and a possible occupation of Syria,”⁹⁴¹ indicating the Middle East. But, how this link between the Turkish coasts and the Middle East would be constituted was again a big question mark since it could still be used as a part of occupation or it could be used as a means for pressure on Turkey in order to gain the right to cross Anatolia.

⁹⁴⁰ *The New York Times*, 7 May 1941.

⁹⁴¹ *The New York Times*, 3 May 1941.



Figure 5. The situation in the Aegean in 1941.

Source: *The New York Times*, 7 May 1941. All the islands were being controlled by the Axis.

Actually, the relationship of Turkey with the Nazis had reflected ambiguity since the beginning of 1941. Turkish political circles feared a possible German attack on their territory. Indeed, this was not far-fetched hypochondria of the Turks. A report of the Secretary of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs also indicated a Russian anxiety about a probable Nazi action in the Straits, which was supposed to be under the Soviet zone of influence.⁹⁴²

However, on the other hand, another document that Ribbentrop sent to the German Ambassador in Moscow suggested that Germany did not have any intent on the Straits unless Turkey acted hostile to the Germans.⁹⁴³ It seems that Germany was actually trying to come closer to Turkey at that time since the above-mentioned

⁹⁴² Sontag and Beddie, pp.268-269.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.277.

developments in the Balkans and the Middle East required such an approach. First of all, the German relationship with the Soviets had deteriorated as a result of the developments in the Balkans, specifically those in Bulgaria and Romania. Germany was trying to approach Turkey, to prevent a possible Turkish-Soviet rapprochement in those conditions, and to secure the region in case of a clash with Russia and the Allied parties. Yet, its method included intimidation since Berlin used the Soviet threat as a diplomatic trump card against Turkey. For instance, after the occupation of Greece, Ambassador von Papen particularly emphasized that Germany and Russia had completely encircled Turkey with the occupation of the Aegean Islands, as a result of which the Allied access to the Turkish ports had been totally cut off, therefore, in these conditions, only the Nazis had the capacity to protect Turkey against the Soviet threat, instead of the Allies.⁹⁴⁴

Second, Berlin was trying to obtain troop transit rights in Anatolia.⁹⁴⁵ German insistence about the transit rights was closely related to the Middle Eastern situation where Germany was expected to take an action in Syria and Palestine, on the one hand, and intervene into the situation in Iraq based on the desire to help pro-German Geylani revolt in the region, on the other hand.

In order to gain this right through a pact, it was claimed that the Germans offered the transfer of Aegean Islands to Turkey.⁹⁴⁶ The German officials denied these claims at that time. Yet, the German diplomatic papers indicate that such an offer, which included an island from the Aegean Sea together with an alteration along the Bulgarian border,

⁹⁴⁴ *The New York Times*, 3 May 1941.

⁹⁴⁵ Tekeli and İlkin, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle*, pp.195-197.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid.

was definitely on the negotiation table.⁹⁴⁷ However, neither the location nor the name of the island is obvious from the diplomatic correspondence.

As a matter of fact, both von Papen and Ribbentrop made a great deal of effort to render the proposal as vague as possible. Von Papen said that he would be content with saying that in case of the agreement, Germany would organize the borders in the region according to the Turkish interest after the war, rather than offering a specific island at that moment.⁹⁴⁸ Ribbentrop, in reply, said that Germany should be careful about its geographic formulations in terms of its offers; at least until the draft treaty was finalized.⁹⁴⁹ It should be noted that these offers are written as “interests” in the notebooks of İnönü, who later mentions that the Germans had changed their minds, attributing this behavior to the meeting that took place between Italian and German officials.⁹⁵⁰

It should be emphasized that Ankara did not intend to get involved in a position like giving transit rights to Germany, which would directly clash with its responsibilities to the Allies, in return for territorial modifications.⁹⁵¹ But the discussion over the islands continued until the German-Turkish Non-Aggression Pact was signed. Actually, the island negotiation was not novel to Turks in 1941, since it had also been an issue between Turkey and Britain just before the end of the British resistance in Greece with the proposal of London suggesting Turkey to occupy Lesvos and Chios temporarily with

⁹⁴⁷ In order to see the concerning diplomatic documents, see S.S.C.B Dış İşleri Bakanlığı Arşiv Bölümü, *Alman Dış İşleri Dairesi Belgeleri, Türkiye'deki Alman Politikası (1941-1943)* (İstanbul: Havass Yayınları, 1977), pp.11-18.

⁹⁴⁸ According to von Papen, making a clear cut offer would have not yielded the desired result anyway, since it was difficult for Turkey to accept it during a period in which the clashes were continuing. Ibid., 20 May 1941, p.16.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., 26 May 1941, pp.17-18.

⁹⁵⁰ İsmet İnönü, *Defterler, 1919-1973*, vol.1 (İstanbul: YKY, 2001), pp.298-300.

⁹⁵¹ Deringil, p.144-145.

the permission of Greece.⁹⁵² Turkey also rejected this offer, on the grounds that it could cause trouble with the Germans,⁹⁵³ who would occupy the area soon afterwards, thus closing the area to the Allies.

What is important in those offers of the British and the Germans, either in specific or vague, was the consideration of the parties that the Turkish foreign policy could have still been directed based on islands as a bargaining item. In other words, they thought that two years after the war broke out and despite multiple concerns of Turkey, the islands remained a soft spot for Ankara. In one sense, they were right that the islands, now from the north to the south, still constituted one of the important components of Turkish security understanding. The acceleration of the military preparations in the Western part of the country in order to safeguard the borders from a surprise attack⁹⁵⁴ at this uncertain period, in which those negotiations were taking place, reveals this fact.

But, they were also inaccurate in two respects. First, the islands were epitomizing only one parameter of Turkish security understanding in the conditions on 1941. Second, the position of Turkey in 1941 designates that despite the geographic enclosure from the West, Ankara did not have any territorial claims,⁹⁵⁵ at least at this point of the course of events that any territorial gains would bring other commitments. In terms of the German case, for instance, Ankara's aim was simply to constitute a non-aggression pact with the Germans yet without giving any transit rights and damaging its ties with the Allies. In this respect, the signing of the German-Turkish Friendship and Non-Aggression Pact in

⁹⁵² Tekeli and İlkin, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle*, p.196.

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴ *The New York Times*, 3 May 1941.

⁹⁵⁵ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam*, vol.2 (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2011), pp.162-163.

June 1941, through which the parties promised to avoid aggressive acts towards each other,⁹⁵⁶ reflects the Turkish understanding in the sense that no secret protocol involving in transit passage or territorial gain was actualized.

After three days that the above-mentioned treaty was signed, Germany initiated the Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, being a step that relieved the Turks, which were occasionally expecting an aggressive act from both sides since the beginning of the war. Thereafter, the importance of the Straits were doubled due to the Allied desire to transport supplies to Russia through these waterways, although this route could not be used owing to the Montreux responsibilities of Turkey as a nonbelligerent country on the one hand, and to the German control of the Aegean Sea in which submarine wars continued making the area dangerous, on the other hand.⁹⁵⁷

Since the assistance could not be extended through the Straits, Britain and the Soviet Union decided to occupy Iran to make the necessary reinforcements. This move of the Allies caused anxiety in Turkey, which thought that a similar kind of intervention might occur in the Straits.⁹⁵⁸ In other words, the relief that Operation Barbarossa brought did not last so long, though Britain and the Soviets gave assurances that they did not have any plans concerning the Turkish territories.⁹⁵⁹

The sole discomfort of Turkey about the Russian assistance was not related to the suspicions about the Straits. When the attention of both sides shifted towards the Middle East during the clash between Germany and the Soviets, the Axis presence in the Aegean, specifically regarding the Dodecanese this time, came up as a significant issue

⁹⁵⁶ For the full text of the Pact see Soysal, p.647.

⁹⁵⁷ Mustafa Hergüner, *İkinci Dünya Savaşında Türk Denizciliği* (İstanbul: Kastaş Yayınevi, 2011), pp.359-360.

⁹⁵⁸ Sönmezoğlu, p.445.

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid, pp.445-446.

for Ankara again, resulting in rising activity in the southern/southwestern flank of Anatolia.

As was stated, Britain and the Soviet Union invaded Iran to constitute a corridor, and additionally to control the oil supplies in the region,⁹⁶⁰ between August and September 1941. The attention on the Middle East, however, especially in relation to the geography of Turkey, was not solely limited to Iran. Before that in June-July, Syria had been another focal point of the warring sides because both the aforementioned Geylani revolt in Iraq and Rommel's advance in Egypt had forced the British to make an operation against Vichy forces in Syria to impede the region from being bases for Germany.⁹⁶¹ But, the Allies continued to expect a German attack to Syria. In other words, the situation in the Middle East in 1941 was very complicated.

In this atmosphere, the position of Turkey was vulnerable from two perspectives. On the one hand, Turkey was a barrier that stood between the Axis and the Middle East. Therefore, it was still in danger regarding a possible attack of the Germans, with a drive to the region. In case of such an act, the predictions about the probable defense especially in terms of Thrace were negative since the Turkish army against the German one was supposedly prone to defeat based on their comparative strength.

On the other hand, in addition to the Turkish position in Thrace, the existence of the Italians and the Germans in the Dodecanese was another concern for Turkey,⁹⁶² especially because of the proximity of the islands to Syria. Actually, Turkey was still worried about the Aegean, which could be used as a base contributing to an attack from

⁹⁶⁰ Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.97.

⁹⁶¹ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (CO: Westview Press, 2009), pp.228-229.

⁹⁶² *The New York Times*, 16 October 1941.

Thrace. In other words, in the conditions of 1941, Turkey still had to take the region into consideration. İnönü says that during this year, “Turkey had mobilized its entire army and concentrated its forces in Thrace and on the shores of the Aegean.”⁹⁶³ This explanation also corresponds to the order of the government that summoned the reserve soldiers to the army in western Anatolia.⁹⁶⁴

Likewise, the Allies were aware of the danger that Turkey faced. It is seen from the American diplomatic papers that Britain discussed the fragile position of Turkey with the US, which was not an official party in the war at that time, despite its support for the Allies through the land-lease agreements. According to these two, despite the Turkish military deficiencies, Anatolia was topographically a much more suitable area than Syria for defense because of the “strong natural positions in Turkey along the line of Taurus mountains which the Allied forces would be able to occupy instead of having stand in Syria.”⁹⁶⁵ In other words, the Allies were determined to draw a defensive line getting through the southern Anatolia if Germany attempted to occupy Turkey from the west in order to reach Syria, which was more difficult to defend.

In addition to the defensive line planned to be used with regard to the Middle East, another concern of the Allies was to utilize the Turkish air fields, which would be under the conduct of the Allied air forces for raids against the Dodecanese, the other

⁹⁶³ İsmet İnönü, *Turkey, Ten Eventful Years, 1938-1947* (New York: Turkish Information Office, 1947), p.5

⁹⁶⁴ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..18.1.2/94.38..2, 6 May 1941.

⁹⁶⁵ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941. *The British Commonwealth; the Near East and Africa*, vol.3, “Memorandum of Conversation by the Secretary of State,” 22 October 1941, p.914-15 <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?id=FRUS.FRUS1941v03> (accessed January 12, 2014).

Aegean Islands, Greece, and the Rumanian oilfields.⁹⁶⁶ The damage on the islands, according to the discussions, would cut the German line of communication with the Balkans and the Rumanian oilfields, which were vital for the Axis.⁹⁶⁷ That means, Turkey, faced with a direct German threat from western Anatolia through Thrace and the Aegean, had been formulated both as a line of defense between the Axis forces and the Middle East, and as a point of attack to the Archipelago on its way to the Balkans and the Mediterranean at the same time, in case of an attack to Syria.

All these plans involving Turkey were directly tied to the Turkish entrance into the war if a possible occupation was put aside. It is necessary to note that apart from a probable benefit of Anatolia vis-à-vis the situation in the Middle East, the position of the Straits vis-à-vis the Soviets was still important. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that incentives for Turkey were always part of the Allied discussions. In a conversation with Eden, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the proposal of Stalin concurring with this period is interesting in this sense, because he frankly suggested that Turkey should receive the Dodecanese as well as certain areas in Bulgaria and Syria.⁹⁶⁸ Although this view can be interpreted as a move for a Soviet demand about the Straits as Şevket Süreyya Aydemir did,⁹⁶⁹ it can also be understood from the perspective of giving incentive in order to push the Turks into the war.

However, at the beginning of 1942, the course of events in terms of the Allies was far from the conditions that Turkey could voluntarily join the warring sides. In the

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1942. *Europe*, vol.3, "Memorandum," 4 February 1942, p.508.

<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=header&id=FRUS.FRUS1942v03&q1> (accessed January 12, 2014).

⁹⁶⁹ Aydemir, pp.194-195.

first half of 1942, the power of the Axis, at least, in terms of the Mediterranean, was still on the rise. In December 1941, the United States had entered the war based on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, yet the US involvement would change balances in the Mediterranean from the second half of 1942. Therefore, in the first half of this year, Germany was still in an advantageous position in the Mediterranean, from the Aegean Islands, resulting in the impairment of the Allied traffic, to the North Africa, especially Libya. These were the facts that Turkey should have seriously considered since it was neighbor with the Axis throughout its Western borders.

Indeed, the next step that the Nazis would follow was unknown in the spring and summer of 1942, leading to multiple predictions about the succeeding goals of Hitler. Actually, Hitler's foremost aim was to reach Caucasia since he thought that the Germans could continue the war only if they acquired oilfields therein.⁹⁷⁰ After Caucasia, it was assumed that the next target for Hitler would be Iraq, either from the north, or from Syria.⁹⁷¹ Not surprisingly, any routes to these destinations could pass through Anatolia.

Whenever Turkey became a point in war predictions related to the Nazi strategy, the Aegean Sea was taken into consideration, since Crete, the Dodecanese Islands, Sicily, Southern Italy, Greece, Samothrace, Lesvos and Chios were full of invasion troops, parachutists, Luftwaffe planes, invasion barges and E-boats.⁹⁷² Ironically, while the islands were considered as a possible part of an Axis assault, they also constituted the excuse of Turkey in front of the Allies, in terms of resisting the desires of the latter, based on the danger that Anatolia was exposed to.

⁹⁷⁰ Tekeli and İlkin, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle*, p.245.

⁹⁷¹ For those expectations, see Winston S. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate: The Second World War* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2002).

⁹⁷² *The New York Times*, 15 March 1942.

Deringil explains that the relationship between the Allies and Turkey was strained at that time, although the parties tried to ignore their diametrically opposite views on certain issues for the sake of the alliance within this fragile period.⁹⁷³ The foreign diplomats in Ankara also questioned this wounded connection in a way that whether the attitude of Turkey could change owing to the setbacks on several fronts.⁹⁷⁴ Indeed, the diplomats foresaw a crisis between Turkey and Britain in near future unless the military situation of the Allies changed; acknowledging the relationship between Turkey and the Allied parties depended on the military balances.⁹⁷⁵ But, these balances were prone to change during the second half of 1942.

Howard suggests that “the Mediterranean Strategy” of the Allies was in gestation during the second half of 1942 while it was born and legitimized at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943.⁹⁷⁶ One of the major components of this strategy, at least during the summer of 1942, was to cut the supply routes of the Germans in the Mediterranean, which remained an Axis dominated area, and to keep Malta.⁹⁷⁷ According to Abulafia, Malta had been saved from Axis occupation because the Nazis had thought that what would determine the future of the Mediterranean war would not be Malta but North Africa,⁹⁷⁸ where General Rommel had advanced in the spring months.

⁹⁷³ Deringil, p.187.

⁹⁷⁴ *The New York Times*, 15 March 1942.

⁹⁷⁵ Deringil, p.185.

⁹⁷⁶ Michael Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War* (London: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), p.35.

⁹⁷⁷ Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *The Naval War in the Mediterranean 1940-1943* (London: Frontline Books, 2011), p. 234.

⁹⁷⁸ Abulafia, p.608.

Likewise, the aforementioned Mediterranean strategy of the Allies, while still involving an effort to open the sea routes, began to focus more on the North Africa, which would distract the German forces from the Soviet front leading to a failure of the Axis. This would also be appropriate to persuade the Americans who were supporting a more defensive approach in the Mediterranean,⁹⁷⁹ leading to occasional problems with the more offensive strategy of the British, as could be seen below in the case of the Dodecanesian campaign. Therefore, the implementation of this strategy with the support of the US troops balanced the position of the Allies in the North Africa with the Axis troops, since they landed on Algeria and Tunisia, made some progress in Libya, and sometimes downgraded the Axis forces into a defensive line. The fate of the Mediterranean was still far from a decisive victory in the end of 1942; though, a kind of balance between the parties had been constituted.

The aforementioned Mediterranean strategy had also implications for both the Dodecanese and Turkish foreign policy. First of all, the aim of the Allies in terms of leading the Nazis to dislocate the troops in order to deal with the clashes in the North Africa and the Soviet Union at the same time had direct impacts on the number of troops in the Dodecanese. The Turkish sources reported that the Axis authorities were withdrawing their troops from the bases on the islands of the Aegean Archipelago, not only in Chios, Samos, and Lesbos, but also in the Dodecanese group, in October 1942.⁹⁸⁰ Based on this intelligence, it was being asserted that with this move, the Axis occupation of the Near East had become a distant probability in the critical periods of 1942 fall and winter, as opposed to the situation in the spring months during which an attack from the

⁹⁷⁹ Howards, pp.34-35.

⁹⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, 15 October 1942.

islands to the region was expected.⁹⁸¹ According to same sources, for the first time since the occupation of Crete, these Aegean bases were left in a vulnerable position for an Allied attack, which might take place in the first quarter of 1943.⁹⁸²

The Allied forces tried to utilize this insecure position of the Dodecanese in the winter months through the raids against the major military bases of the Dodecanese group, especially the naval ones of Leros. However, to what extent they achieved to cause major damage through these raids remains as an enigma. Obviously, the fall of the Dodecanese could not be expected with the scattered raids since Rome had formulated the islands as the strongholds of Italy in the Mediterranean all through the interwar period. Therefore, it is no surprising to see that the Allied powers would begin to discuss a proper campaign against the Dodecanese throughout late 1942 and early 1943.

In all these talks, the discussion of the Dodecanese would go hand in hand with the possible position of Turkey. During the period in which the Allied powers began to gain ascendancy both in the Mediterranean through the North Africa and in Russia through the Soviet successes against the Nazi Germany, the British returned to their original position which pushed Turkey to enter the war.⁹⁸³ In other words, the Allied attitude in terms of ensuring Turkey's position as friendly neutral country in the face of German pressure came to an end with the last months of 1942.

According to the Turkish officials, the Axis was still influential in the Aegean Archipelago and the facilities as well as the war plans of the Allied forces were not

⁹⁸¹ Ibid.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ Deringil, p.188.

compatible with the regional situation.⁹⁸⁴ Therefore, Turkey should not have participated in the war in the direction of the Allied desires in these conditions on which President İnönü expressed his suspicions about “the eventuality of aggression” that the direction or pretexts could not be foreseen.⁹⁸⁵ The Allied parties regarded the stance of İnönü as a bugaboo in order to create solidarity in domestic politics as well as to carry out non-belligerent foreign policy agenda, because according to them the threat of attack from the Dodecanese Islands had faded out with the transport of the German troops from the region to the North Africa, at least until the spring of 1943.⁹⁸⁶

The power of the German deployment in the region would come out during 1943. However, for the time being, Churchill asked for the Turkish participation regardless of the Axis power in the Dodecanese, since he desired the Turkish involvement in war through a Balkan front to compel the Germans and to balance the power of the Soviet Russia in the region around which the Germans were in retreat since November 1942.⁹⁸⁷ Turkey, in this respect, could be a key country in dealing with this.⁹⁸⁸

This attitude is clearly seen at the Casablanca Conference, which took place between 14 and 24 January 1943, to determine the next Allied agenda regarding the European scene. When the conference ended, one of the objectives of the Allies had been settled as the constitution of the necessary conditions in order to make Turkey an

⁹⁸⁴ T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, Araştırma ve Siyaset Planlama Genel Müdürlüğü, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları, 1939-1946, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları, 1939-1946* vol.5 of *Türk Dış Politikasında 50 Yıl*. (Ankara: Genel Müdürlük, 1973), s.147.

⁹⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, 8 November 1942.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁷ Armaoğlu, pp.165-166. Both the US and Britain feared from the Soviet Russia's absolute dominancy in the Balkans.

⁹⁸⁸ Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, p.848.

active ally.⁹⁸⁹ And, how this might be achieved focused again on the Dodecanese Islands. In one of the meetings of the Chiefs of Staff, Sir Alan Brooke from the Royal Army argued that the way which could make Turkey belligerent passed through making territorial promises about the Dodecanese, Syria, and Bulgaria.⁹⁹⁰ At this point, it should be stated that the understanding between the military and diplomatic circles especially in terms of Britain with regard to the Dodecanese was different from each other since the former was more interested in the practical side of the matter like bringing Turkey in; the latter had to take the Greek factor into consideration.

In Casablanca, the Chiefs of Staff discussed other issues, concerning the relationship between the islands and the Turkish mainland, as well. It is important to note that the military officials frankly emphasized how the Dodecanese could be captured in a much easier way once Turkey joined the Allied side.⁹⁹¹ They imagined Turkey's involvement in war similar to the understanding of 1939, in terms of conducting an assault either from Turkey or with the Turks. However, the negotiations over Turkey and the Dodecanese were now much more complicated than the sole direction of a campaign against the Aegean Archipelago from Anatolia with the inclusion of Turkey on the warring side.

A reverse scenario was also on the table. According to the British officers, the fall of Italy as well as the capture of the Dodecanese could induce Turkish entry into the

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.844.

⁹⁹⁰ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States. *The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943 (1941-1943)*, "Allied Plans Relating to Turkey," 19 January 1943, p.651. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS194143> (accessed January 15, 2014).

⁹⁹¹ Ibid.

war,⁹⁹² since it would clear the southwestern flank of Turkey, which had always been concerned with a direct threat from the islands. With this move, the eastern Aegean also would be opened to Allied shipping, which had been blocked since 1940.⁹⁹³ Therefore, according to the officials, the final document of 1943 strategy that the Allied Chiefs of Staff would prepare should involve the Dodecanese matter in one way or another.⁹⁹⁴

The idea of clearing the Aegean of the Axis in order to relieve the Turks, who then could enter the war, was mainly the idea of the British, especially of Churchill himself. Yet, the U.S. questioned this insistence of Britain. According to them, the primary aim of the Allied forces was Operation Husky, through which Sicily would be captured. This operation could not be achieved simultaneously with a campaign against the Dodecanese Islands.⁹⁹⁵ This divergence of opinions between the US and Britain over the primacy of a Dodecanese campaign persisted until the end of 1943. But despite this conflict, the parties continued to discuss the necessary preparations about Dodecanese during the Casablanca process.

As was suggested above, in the minds of the British, the Dodecanese was fundamental to Turkey since it might enter the war with the Allied capture of the former. However, in order for the Allied powers to achieve this, Turkey would have to help them at the same time. Even if Turkey was non-belligerent at that time, it could provide valuable bases for the Allied forces to an extent that the capture of the islands could be handled through an air offensive from the airfields in Anatolia facing Rhodes, yet after

⁹⁹² Ibid. "Meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 16 January 1943, p.584, p.598.

⁹⁹³ Ibid. "Memorandum by the British Joint Planning Staff," 18 January 1943, pp.768-771.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid. "Meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff with Roosevelt and Churchill," 18 January 1943, pp.629-630.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.

they were constructed or improved.⁹⁹⁶ The officials underlined that the military constructions, forces, and supplies were significant not only regarding the campaign in the Aegean Archipelago, but also regarding the proof about the ability of the Allies to send the necessary assistance about which the Turkey often complained.

Just after Casablanca, on 30-31 January 1943, İnönü and Churchill met in Adana. During the Adana Conference, Churchill tried to persuade İnönü to participate in the war, but he refused him on the grounds that the Allied military assistance was not to the degree that had been promised.⁹⁹⁷ The Turkish concerns focused more on the post-war position of Soviet Russia and the question of the Straits, as the Achilles heel for Moscow. Definitely, the Soviet accomplishments against Germany had led to Turkish anxiety and Churchill had made an effort to relieve these fears during the meeting.⁹⁹⁸ It should be noted that after the conference, Churchill also had sent a letter to Stalin about the necessity to increase the transfer of arms to Turkey, as well as to ensure the Turks about their anxieties.⁹⁹⁹

Apart from the necessity of transferring arms to Turkey, Churchill also emphasized the need to work on the construction and improvement of airfields in Anatolia, which were very important for Turkey.¹⁰⁰⁰ Öztoprak writes that Britain asked for necessary permissions to use these airfields against the Rumanian oilfields even if

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid, "Memorandum by the British Joint Planning Staff," 18 January 1943, pp.768-74.

⁹⁹⁷ Aydemir, pp.258-259.

⁹⁹⁸ Churchill, in order to ease the Turkish tension for the Soviets, had explained the future peace mechanism would be more powerful and effective than the League of Nations and emphasized that Britain would not have supported the USSR if it turned out to be another Germany. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, pp.864-866.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid. pp.869-871. Stalin, in his reply, had stated that Russia had made friendly gestures to Turkey, yet had not received any positive return from Ankara. Ibid. pp.871-872.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid. pp.862.

Turkey remained technically neutral.¹⁰⁰¹ In addition to Rumania, those bases would also be very helpful to attack to the Dodecanese and Crete.¹⁰⁰² Although Churchill does not mention the Aegean in relation to the Adana meetings in his memoirs, a report sent by the American Ambassador in Ankara indicates that the issue of the bases vis-à-vis Rumania, the Dodecanese, and Crete was mentioned during the meetings.¹⁰⁰³ Although the Turks would reject the desires of Britain in terms of the bases, Turkey would assist the British forces through different means, other than the use of bases, during the Dodecanesian campaign in the autumn of 1943, as will be seen below.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the Adana meeting. Deringil argues that the aims of the parties were profoundly diverse.¹⁰⁰⁴ Despite this fact, one of most concrete results of the meeting was the promise of Churchill to provide a more intense schedule of military assistance to Turkey in order to make it belligerent.¹⁰⁰⁵ Another concrete result of the Adana meeting occurred in the spring months of 1943 when the high ranking military officials of the both sides got together to discuss the details of Operation Hardihood, which included the conditions needed to make Turkey belligerent.

¹⁰⁰¹ İzzet Öztoprak, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Döneminde Adana Görüşmelerinin Siyasi Yönü," <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-46/ikinci-dunya-savasi-doneminde-adana-gorusmelerinin-siyasi-yonu> (accessed January 14, 2014).

¹⁰⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰⁰³ In a telegram to the US Secretary of State, the Ambassador writes: "*The British Ambassador, who returned to Ankara this evening, has given me the following resume of the Adana Conference: Churchill made the following points: ...4. Without becoming a belligerent, Turkey might at some time consider taking the same position as the United States before it entered the war, by a "departure from strict neutrality." Thus Turkey might grant permission to use Turkish airfields from which to bomb the Rumanian oil fields, the Dodecanese Islands and Crete...*" For the entire report, see United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States, *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers, 1943. The Near East and Africa (1943)*, "The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State," 2 February 1943, pp.1060-1061. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1943v04.p1072&id=FRUS.FRUS1943v04&isize=M&q1=adana%20conference> (accessed 9 June, 2015).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Deringil, pp.197-198.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid., p.198.

These meetings are significant for this dissertation, because it is seen that action plan for the Dodecanese and other Aegean islands was brought into the agenda one more time although the Turks had no plan to enter the war in the short term. On the one hand, according to the British Military Attaché of Ankara, the option of the right to use of the Anatolian airfields in the Dodecanesian campaign should have been seriously discussed instead of bringing Turkey into the war since the Turkish army was “more of a liability than an asset.”¹⁰⁰⁶ Therefore, passive assistance from the Turks in the form of air bases was sufficient to determine the success or the failure of the attempt.¹⁰⁰⁷

On the other hand, the belligerency of Turkey was desired especially by Churchill, who had complained to Roosevelt about the stance of Ankara, which was demanding more equipment, despite the major military assistance the Allies had made.¹⁰⁰⁸ In this respect, his efforts to make Turkey declare war continued, and he even asked his Foreign Secretary the possibility of giving Rhodes to Turkey as a reward for joining the Allied forces in the attack against the Dodecanese.¹⁰⁰⁹

Although the Foreign Secretary rejected him on the grounds that such an incentive could damage the relationship with Greece, which should have received most of the Dodecanese Islands after the war, owing to the Greek character of the region, the discussions about giving an island as a bribe persisted for a while within similar dynamics.¹⁰¹⁰ It should also be emphasized that the Foreign Secretary, while indicating the possible repercussions of a decision about the Dodecanese Islands on the Aegean

¹⁰⁰⁶ The National Archives, PREM 3/3/6, Telegram from Military Attache Ankara to War Office, 19 April 1943.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid., Minute from Chief of the Air Staff to Prime Minister, 11 April 1943.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid., Telegram from Former Naval Person to President Roosevelt, 26 April 1943.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., Minute from Prime Minister to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 4 April 1943.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid., Minute from Prime Minister to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 9 April 1943.

balance of power, also questioned the low probability of a positive result that such a policy could yield, owing to the reluctance of Ankara to risk war in return for territorial adjustment.¹⁰¹¹

Indeed, Turkey had already declared its negative position in terms of gaining additional territory. But, throughout those meetings, the standing of Turkey reflected a similar paradoxical situation, probably because of the different concerns of military and political circles similar to the above-mentioned Allied one. The British correspondence also implies this understanding.

In this regard, while the Allies acknowledged that the Turkish political circles did not have any territorial ambitions, they mentioned the existence of such a desire in the military circles, though not in any way prevalent.¹⁰¹² Yet, despite the absence of such aims, at least in the official political statements, it is interesting to see that the Turkish General Staff negotiated keenly over the plans, organizing who would attack where. For instance, while the Allies desired the Turks to handle the campaign towards the northern Aegean Islands, like Chios and Lesvos, the Turks insisted on the plans of 1940, in which the major target of attacks for the Turkish troops was the Dodecanese.¹⁰¹³

The Turks explained the reasons behind this desire in strategic terms. Fevzi Çakmak stated, “if the British were undertaking the capture of the southern Aegean Islands, there would not be sufficient Allied aircraft to provide cover for the Turkish forces operating further north.”¹⁰¹⁴ But, it can be argued that Turkey’s ongoing insistence went beyond strategic matters, in other words, carried some considerations, at

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid.

¹⁰¹² Ibid., Telegram from Military Attaché Ankara to War Office, 19 April 1943.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁴ The National Archives, WO 106/3260, Extracts from the Minutes of the First Meeting between Marshal Feviz Cakmak and General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, 16 April 1943.

least for the post-war negotiations, especially if the nature of these negotiations are kept in mind, as will be displayed below. A similar understanding was prevalent also in the official correspondence of the Allies, who suspected possible consequences of active or passive assistance of Turkey in the Dodecanese campaign in terms of the Turkish claims over the region in postwar settlements.¹⁰¹⁵

The Allied officials asserted that Turkey felt as if it had been forced to enter the war, about which Fevzi Cakmak was ordered by his government not to discuss anything other than defensive matters of Anatolia.¹⁰¹⁶ But, the attitude of him was sometimes so conflictual that he could even insist on the region in which the Turkish forces should land. That is to say, even if Ankara wanted to stay out of war, it had to discuss the details of war. Likewise, even if it was always emphasized that Turkey did not have any territorial ambitions, it made some calculations for the post-war period. As was suggested above, inconsistency is a word that defines the nature of the meetings that took place in the spring of 1943, from the perspectives of both two parties. However, it also should be stated that such contradictions may have been the result of different focal points of diplomacy/politics and military strategy.

In the Allied meetings during the spring of 1943, the details of Operation Accolade (Dodecanese) were discussed while the fate of Operation Husky (Sicily) was shown as cancelled.¹⁰¹⁷ But as opposed to this orientation, it was the Dodecanese operation that was cancelled during the summer. After the capture of the strategic island of Pantelleria in June 1943, the Allies launched Operation Husky in July 1943, after

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid., Report of Chiefs of Staff Committee, Meeting to be held on 12th April, 1943, Dodecanese, 12 April 1943.

¹⁰¹⁶ The National Archives, PREM 3/3/6, Telegram from General Wilson to Prime Minister, 23 April 1943.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., Minute from Office of the Minister of Defense to Prime Minister, 29 April 1943.

which the fall of Mussolini and gradual invasion of Italy took place.¹⁰¹⁸ The armistice of Italy on 8 September 1943 with the Allies was a significant development for course of war in Europe and in the Mediterranean. But, while the situation in the Mediterranean drew closer to certainty with the Allied victory, the position of the Dodecanese led to further complications especially in terms of the Italian surrender in the islands and the future action of the Allies in the region.

Actually, during the period between the beginning of Operation Husky and the surrender of Italy, the Dodecanese was still on the agenda of Churchill, even if not in the one of the Allies in common. According him, the most important strategic benefit of the capture would be entrance of Turkey into the war with the control of the Aegean Archipelago.¹⁰¹⁹ In other words, Churchill thought that the most important obstacle on the way of Turkish involvement in the war was the Axis domination in the area and the opening of the Aegean Sea would bring Turkey in the war. In this sense, throughout the summer of 1943, the British officials tried to arrange the capture of the Dodecanese while the Italian surrender was coming up. However, the plan of the British could not be materialized during this period, due to the use of the scarce resources in other operations and the conflict of strategy between the US and Britain.

Indeed, according to the US officials, Churchill was obsessed with the Eastern Mediterranean because of the political gains related to the postwar settlements more than anything else.¹⁰²⁰ Therefore, the US strongly resisted the peripheral Mediterranean strategy of Britain during the Quebec meeting of August 1943, after which the necessary

¹⁰¹⁸ Abulafia, p.611.

¹⁰¹⁹ Jeffrey Holland, *The Aegean Mission: Allied Operations in the Dodecanese, 1943*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1988, p.12.

¹⁰²⁰ Anthony Rogers, *Churchill's Folly Leros and the Aegean, The Last Great British Defeat of the World War Two*, London: Cassell, 2003, p.29.

troops were sent to Italy, thus making the Dodecanese a low-priority initiative.¹⁰²¹ But, when the Italian surrender seemed imminent, Churchill began to exert pressure again on the Middle Eastern Command. According to the strategic anticipations of the Allies, the Italian troops, which were 35,000 on Rhodes at that time, would not resist and even assist the British forces in dealing with the Germans, decreasing the need to transfer troops from the Middle East.¹⁰²²

According to the British, the Allies had to take the control of the region as soon as possible because if the Germans occupied the islands, there would be no chance of the Allies to bring Turkey in the war, and to open a Balkan front, the idea of Churchill, with the help of the Turks. Another British fear was the surrender of the islands to Turks about which the British intelligence was claiming that the negotiations between the Dodecanese governorate and the Turkish state were taking place through the Italian Consulate in İzmir during August 1943.¹⁰²³

The correspondence indicates that the British Foreign Office was discussing the “danger” of an Italian surrender to Turkey,¹⁰²⁴ not being very different from the dynamics of 1940. Although the officials acknowledged that Turkey was a country that did not have any imperialist tendencies in general, they also emphasized that the matter for the Turks was strictly related to its security and strategy,¹⁰²⁵ indicating that Turkey was seriously interested in the issue. What these documents demonstrate is that the different components of the British politics were volatile about the islands vis-à-vis

¹⁰²¹ Ian Gooderson, “Shoestring Strategy: The British Campaign in the Aegean, 1943,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no.3 (2002), p.6-7.

¹⁰²² Ibid., p.7.

¹⁰²³ The National Archives, WO 106/3260, Telegram from Cairo to War Office, 29 August 1943.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid., Telegram from Foreign Office to Minister of State in Cairo, 7 August 1943.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid., Paper, Turkey and the Dodecanese, 2 September 1943.

Turkey. While the military circles frequently discussed giving certain islands to Turkey to make it enter the war, the Foreign Office feared any action that could justify the Turkish claims over the region in the future.

The similar concerns would come to the surface again with the official Italian surrender on the mainland. The British Ambassador in Ankara, Knatchbull-Hugessen informed the Foreign Office in October 1943 that German Ambassador Von Pappen had frankly stated to the Turkish officials that Germany had little interest in the Dodecanese, and Mussolini's government could surrender the islands to Turkey¹⁰²⁶ in order to ensure the non-belligerency of Ankara. The reply of Numan Menemencioğlu, who stated that "even if Badoglio Government had made such proposal, the Turkish government could not entertain it because Italy's unconditional surrender had given the Allies a mortgage on all Italian possessions,"¹⁰²⁷ was a relief for Britain, which did not want to deal with any diplomatic problems at that time, concerning the Turkish-Greek relationship over the Dodecanese.

However, abstaining from a diplomatic problem, the Allies, with the famous "improvise and dare" strategy of Churchill, had taken a step towards a major military problem that would continue more than two months. Between 9 and 20 September 1943, the Allied forces started the Dodecanese operation after the Italian surrender and landed on Kastellorizo, Kos, Leros, Samos, Scarpanto, Kalimnos, Symi, and Stampalia.¹⁰²⁸ Although the Allied forces took control of the above-mentioned islands in the first days, Rhodes remained under the occupation of the Germans. The most important determinant for the fate of the campaign was Rhodes, the key of the whole group, which Winston

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid., War Cabinet Distribution, From Angora to Foreign Office, 2 October 1943.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ For a more detailed account, see The National Archives, WO 106/3255, Dodecanese Diary.

Churchill pressured the military officials to capture although the officials had reiterated the impossibility of such an action, due to the fact that the Italian forces on the island had surrendered to the Germans rather than resisting them, as the British desired and expected.¹⁰²⁹

The Germans, who were strong on Rhodes and were determined to defend the island at all cost, also aimed at capturing the above-mentioned islands under the occupation of the Allies after a couple of days passed. A major battle between the German and the Allied forces began in the region. One of the most important battlegrounds was Kos, as the only island in the Dodecanese group with suitable airfield other than Rhodes.¹⁰³⁰ The Allied officials were aware of the fact that as long as the Germans had control of Rhodes, keeping Kos and using its airfields were almost impossible.¹⁰³¹

This knowledge became a reality with the German air assaults until 4 October, when the Nazi forces completely occupied Kos. Thereafter, the German air and naval forces together with the paratroopers occupied the other islands in the hands of the Allies one by one. On 22 November 1943, all the Allied forces including the Italians had been evacuated from the Dodecanese Islands to the facing coast through the boats.¹⁰³²

The “improvise and dare” ended in fiasco.

¹⁰²⁹Holland, pp.34-35. Indeed, London was highly confident about the resistance of Italian troops in the islands against the Germans during the Italian surrender of 1943, which would help the Allied takeover of the Dodecanese. Therefore, the surrender of the Italian soldiers- not all but many of them- had become disappointing for the British.

¹⁰³⁰The National Archives, WO 106/3255, Dodecanese Diary, 14 September 1943. It was extremely surprising that the airfield of Leros was far from being practical at that time.

¹⁰³¹Ibid., Dodecanese Diary, 22 September 1943.

¹⁰³²Ibid., 22 November 1943.

The Dodecanese campaign that the British had negotiated much since 1939 was a thorough defeat for the Allies. Military historians explain several reasons for this. For instance, according to Smith and Walker, since the key of the group was Rhodes, when it fell into the hands of the Nazis, the Allies should have either abandoned the whole operation or captured this island before dealing with the others.¹⁰³³ This strategic argument, on the other hand, is strictly related to the other facts about the campaign. One of them is the German aerial superiority to the Allied one because Hitler had well understood the importance of the Aegean combat, especially in terms of its probable impacts on Turkey, hence in the Dardanelles and the Balkans; thus, transferred troops and planes to the region at the expense of the other areas.¹⁰³⁴

Indeed, when his commanders suggested the evacuation of the Dodecanese Islands since Germany was no longer in an offensive position in the Mediterranean; Hitler had objected to this idea, stating that “the attitude of our allies in the southeast and Turkey's attitude is determined solely by their confidence in our strength. Abandonment of the islands would create a most unfavourable impression.”¹⁰³⁵ Churchill quotes this statement in his memoirs, in which he says that the Dodecanese campaign had justified Hitler,¹⁰³⁶ implying that after this defeat Turkey did not want to declare belligerency with reason.

Another reason for the defeat was the disagreement between the British and the Americans, based on the necessity of the operation, which had prevented the Middle

¹⁰³³ Peter C. Smith and Edwin R. Walker, *War in the Aegean, The Campaign for the Eastern Mediterranean in WWII* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stockpole Books, 2008), p.260.

¹⁰³⁴ Gooderson, p.28, Deringil, p.207.

¹⁰³⁵ Winston S. Churchill, *Closing the Ring: The Second World War* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2002), p.260.

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid. pp.260-261.

Eastern Command to dedicate necessary troops and military equipment to the Archipelago. Yet, it should be noted that even if the Allies had more planes, they lacked the necessary airfields in the region. This explains the Allied insistence on holding Kos, which had the only suitable airfield other than Rhodes at that time. This issue of the airfields, as a strategic deficit of the Allied campaign, brings us to the role of Turkey in this operation.

Putting the local impacts of the war took place within a “shouting” distance of the Anatolian territory aside; the Dodecanese campaign of the Allied powers had been a significant element in Turkish foreign policy. Since the military authorities of the Allies had already known the problem of the ports necessary for the dispatch of the military supplies, the British had begun to pressure the Turkish authorities for help right after the Italian surrender not only in terms of shipping, but also in terms of provision of the supplies to an extent that in the British aid memorandum sent to Turkey, London reminded the assistance that they had sent in previous year, as a circumstance it was time to repay.¹⁰³⁷

The stance of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not so positive toward the desire of the Allies to ship military supplies. Menemencioğlu questioned the intent of the request and even the 1939 treaty, whether it was a way of bringing Turkey into the war.¹⁰³⁸ Indeed, while the Turkish Minister seemed much more reconcilable in civilian dispatches, the desire to transfer ammunition and petroleum set off a crisis in Ankara.¹⁰³⁹

The British archival material shows that after this exigency in the diplomatic situation,

¹⁰³⁷ The National Archives, CAB 120/502, From Foreign Office to Angora/Aide Memoire, 17 September 1943.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid., 19 September 1943.

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid. Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 19 September 1943, Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 21 September 1943.

the Allied officials discussed even the transfer of the supplies without the consent of Turkey:

It is doubtful whether it would in any case be practicable to remove and despatch munitions from dumps without Turkish consent, but in my considered view it would be most unwise to try. When the facts came to the ears of government, as they would be bound to do, Minister for Foreign Affairs would suspect us of trying to bring them into the war as the Germans did in 1914, and Minister for Foreign Affairs would be on good wicket with us cancelling present supply arrangements to the Islands and declining to co-operate in wider matters.¹⁰⁴⁰

At the end of this tough diplomatic process, the parties found a way to solve the existing problem via the utilization of the Red Crescent, through which both the civilian and military supplies were sent to the nearby islands together, so Turkey could claim the transfer as a normal relief operation if necessary.¹⁰⁴¹ The Allies frequently sent dispatches to the islands from Turkey by means of boats beginning with the end of September, when the clashes began. However, it also should be emphasized that they carried out all these operations secretly. Even the Soviet Russia had no knowledge about the Turkish-British cooperation. For instance, during a colloquium with the Russians, who complained about the Turkish neutrality and unhelpfulness, the British Ambassador of Ankara, Hugessen, tried to correct the impression by stating that the Turks were more forthcoming, yet without saying anything about the operations that took place between the islands and the Turkish mainland.¹⁰⁴² According to Hugessen, Turkey's stance was improving every day. The transfers sat in a systematic pattern, based on the transfer of

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid. Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 21 September 1943.

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴² Ibid., Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 15 October 1943.

the munitions from the Turkish ports coming from the Middle East with special trains.¹⁰⁴³

The assistance of Turkey during the campaign went beyond the provision and shipping of the supplies. The Turkish territorial waters became a refuge for the Allied forces. Hugessen noted that during days of clashes, special boats and even destroyers withdrew to Turkish waters, especially at nights. The Turkish authorities remained silent about these occasional cases, although they were well aware of the every incident taking place within their borders.¹⁰⁴⁴ Putting this willful ignorance aside, Turkey arranged even the “non-functioning of a visible lighthouse in the Aegean peninsula” in order to help the British naval forces.¹⁰⁴⁵

Despite the British efforts to keep the Turkish attitude secret, the Germans sent Turkey a note of protest about its non-neutral attitude.¹⁰⁴⁶ But, the major accusation of Germany was specifically related to the British use of the Turkish airfields in the Aegean region,¹⁰⁴⁷ although it should be stated that Turkey did not permit the use of its air fields in the region at any time during the war,¹⁰⁴⁸ despite its assistance to the Allies, as was suggested above.

The reason behind the Eden-Menemencioğlu meeting that was held in Cairo on 6-8 November 1943 was specifically related to this issue. Before that, during the Moscow Conference that began on 19 October 1943 among the Foreign Ministers of the US, Soviet Russia, and Britain; the Soviet Commissar Molotov had declared the Russian

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid., Telegram from Foreign Office to Angora, 12 October 1943.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Holland, p.53.

desire for Turkey to enter the war immediately.¹⁰⁴⁹ However, the Americans were against forcing Turkey to enter the war since they knew that Turkish belligerency would necessitate arms and supplies, thus supporting the idea of the ability to use the Turkish air bases instead.¹⁰⁵⁰ At the end of the conference, the Allies had decided to tell the Turks to enter the war as soon as possible, yet in the meantime to give the necessary rights to use the air fields in Anatolia to the Allied forces,¹⁰⁵¹ somewhat compiling the two ideas.

Eden presented this decision to the Turkish Foreign Minister at the aforementioned Cairo meeting. According to the British, the Allied troops would neutralize Rhodes and Kos with the use of the airfields in Anatolia, if Turkey agreed to enter the war or permit the use of its airbases.¹⁰⁵² Menemencioğlu stated that Turkey was not against to be a warring side, yet wanted political guarantees for its territorial integrity in the postwar settlements, obviously indicating the Soviet threat. He also asked for the necessary military aid, which was not being provided as the Allies had promised.¹⁰⁵³

In terms of the use of the air bases, on the other hand, Turkish reply was definitely negative since any permission for the Allied use of the Anatolian airfields would mean intervention in the war, to which German forces could give an answer of retaliation against the Turkish cities.¹⁰⁵⁴ In his memoirs of the Second World War, Churchill says that the Turks refused the British offers to supply the necessary arms in

¹⁰⁴⁹ Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p.352.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Aydın, p.269.

¹⁰⁵¹ Smith and Walker, p.190.

¹⁰⁵² The National Archives, PREM 3/3/2, Telegram from W.C.O London to J.S. M. Washington, 10 November 1943.

¹⁰⁵³ Aydın, p.271.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p.409.

order to deal with such retaliation, but they were justifiable in their standing since the Allied failure in the Dodecanese campaign occurred before their eyes.¹⁰⁵⁵

Despite the Turkish stance, the active involvement of Turkey in the war and the utilization of the Aegean airfields as soon as possible as the islands persisted to occupy the agenda of the Allies even after the evacuation of the British forces from the Dodecanese. The Allied meetings in Cairo that took place between 22 and 26 November 1943 show that despite the British defeat in the Dodecanese, the idea of capturing the islands did not come to an end. According to the report of the Middle Eastern Command, it was still necessary to capture especially Rhodes in order to cut the German ring in the Aegean Sea while the success of the operation depended on the Turkish position.¹⁰⁵⁶ This stance was twofold. On the one hand, Turkey could attack the other minor islands after the capture of Rhodes, with the exception of Lemnos, where the Germans were heavily fortified, showing the military understanding to utilize Turkey in the Dodecanese again. On the other hand, the Turkish airfields, which were ready except those two across from Rhodes under construction, would be utilized in the action.¹⁰⁵⁷

The situation in the Aegean together with the fate of Turkey was an important topic of discussion also in Tehran between 28 November and 1 December 1943, when the Allies discussed the future of the war. The British insistence on the Turkish belligerency together with the capture of the Dodecanese persisted on the grounds that it would open the Dardanelles to the Allies, making the issue of supplies to the Soviets

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁶ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States, *The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, "Combined Chief of Staff Minutes," 26 November 1943, p.361. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?id=FRUS.FRUS1943CairoTehran> (accessed February 17, 2014).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid. p.362.

easier.¹⁰⁵⁸ Besides, with the Turkish interference, the situation in the Balkans, especially with regard to Romania and Bulgaria, would be reversed, making the fall of these two countries imminent.¹⁰⁵⁹

The plans of the British about the Turkish involvement progressed hand in hand with the Dodecanesian campaign again. The authorities in the conference acknowledged the indispensability of dealing with the islands if Turkey entered the war.¹⁰⁶⁰ This acknowledgement indicates that while the Turkish involvement in the capture of the islands was always been a significant element in the Dodecanesian problem, the reverse angle still persisted to be an important matter, too. That is to say, according to the officials, the Turkish belligerency could be rendered unnecessary unless the Dodecanese, specifically Rhodes, was captured and the way along the Aegean, thus the Straits and the Balkans, was opened.

However, the Allied military authorities challenged the British obsession with the Turkish involvement in the war and in the Dodecanesian campaign, thus with the utilization of the Aegean and the Straits. According to them, even if Turkey entered the war, it would take six to eight months to open the Dardanelles because another operation in the Aegean would necessitate the change of bases as well as military assistance to Turkey which would mean time in any way.¹⁰⁶¹ The airfields in Turkey, which were

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid. "Joint Chiefs of Staff Minutes," 28 November 1943, p.447.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Valentin Berojkov, *Tahran 1943, Yeni Bir Dünyaya Doğru* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012), p. 109.

¹⁰⁶⁰ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States, *The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Minutes," 28 November 1943, p.480.

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid., p.477

usable and in construction as the ones across from Rhodes should have been streamlined both for heavy and medium bombers.¹⁰⁶²

The only concern of the Soviets and the Americans about the future Dodecanesian campaign was not related to the problems of strategy and equipment regarding Turkey in order to open the shipping way. It was also firmly tied to the fact that the above-mentioned assistance to Turkey and the transfer of troops to the region would postpone Operation Overlord; in other words, the Battle of Normandy, which was regarded as the key campaign that would bring the end of the war.¹⁰⁶³ The Soviet commissar Molotov challenged both the Turkish entrance and the capture of the islands if those actions would mean the reschedule of Operation Overlord.¹⁰⁶⁴ Throughout the Tehran Conference, the British officials made efforts to explain the merits of Turkish belligerency together with an attempt on the Dodecanese at the expense of Overlord, Fiume, or Andaman Islands, which were all discussed in terms of possible places of campaign.

However, it should be emphasized that apart from the need to persuade the Russians and Americans, the British officials had to deal also with their own institutions in terms of the Turkish assistance in the war. Although the idea of the military circles, was prone to a mutual attack with the Turks against the Dodecanese about which they assumed Turkey had an ardent desire of offensive based on a false evaluation or intelligence, the diplomatic circles were against any involvement of Turkey in the

¹⁰⁶² Ibid., p .480.

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid. "Hopkins-Eden-Molotov Luncheon Meeting," 30 November 1943, p.574.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid.

Dodecanese.¹⁰⁶⁵ They rather advocated the use of Turkish troops against the “undisputedly Greek” islands, in the northern part of the Archipelago.¹⁰⁶⁶ Obviously, this negotiation was a repetition of the previous years’ discussions. Whenever the Turkish involvement in an attack concerning the Archipelago was discussed, it had become a tradition to debate the future of the islands, giving clues about the possible British standing on the postwar settlement of the region.

The debates during the Tehran Conference show that Roosevelt challenged the issue of the Dodecanese that Churchill had formulated. Roosevelt and Churchill argued even over the number of forces that should be sent to Turkey as well as the military equipment that would be necessary for the Dodecanese campaign.¹⁰⁶⁷ Roosevelt urged Churchill about not to promise anything before the Allies had made the necessary inquiries on the forces needed for the operations on Italy, England, and Indian Ocean.¹⁰⁶⁸ The reply of Churchill, who stated that he had not made any promises to the Turks for the moment and he was not even sure that İnönü would meet the Allies in Cairo, which had been decided as a point of meeting with the Turks one more time,¹⁰⁶⁹ is important in terms of showing the stance of Turks still insisting on non-belligerency.

As opposed to the suspicions of Churchill, İnönü and Menemencioğlu met the Allied leaders in Cairo between 4 and 7 December 1943. The Allies, especially Churchill, reiterated their insistence on Turkey’s entering the war during this meeting, especially indicating February 1944. Turkey accepted the war in principle, but repeated

¹⁰⁶⁵ The National Archives, PREM 3/3/2, Minute from the Office of the Minister of Defense to Prime Minister, 29 November 1943, Minute from British Legation, Tehran to Prime Minister, 1 December 1943.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Berojkov, p.113.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ibid. p.114.

the military weakness of the country against the Germans and demanded a program of supplies. This led to a series of meetings between the Allied and Turkish officers in Ankara to discuss the military issues for Turkish preparations.¹⁰⁷⁰ However, despite the decisions taken in Cairo and the negotiations between the military officials in Ankara, Turkey's decision to remain non-belligerent continued. In other words, Turkey did not enter the war in February 1944, as the British desired, and the aforementioned military negotiations came to an end due to the Turkish resistance to accept the certain conditions about the military assistance, like the geographies on which the Allies wanted to construct bases or the appointment of personnel in the army to train the Turkish staff.¹⁰⁷¹

All these disagreements were excuses masking the Turkish resistance to enter the war. Turkish Chief of General Staff, on the other hand, explained the reason for the Turkish reluctance as the possibility of a Nazi attack since the Germans were still strong on the islands through which they could deal a blow to the big Turkish cities,¹⁰⁷² as they could do from Bulgaria. In other words, the German existence in the islands seemed to have still been one of the parameters for Turkish foreign policy in a period that the Nazis were being pushed backward on all fronts.

While Turkey was careful about the German existence in the Dodecanese, Germany was rather concerned with the possibility of the Turkish involvement in war. It is seen that even during January 1944, the Germans were still sending troops to the Dodecanese from Crete.¹⁰⁷³ This movement of the German troops was directly related to the increasing pressure of the Allies on Turkey, which could enter the war and then

¹⁰⁷⁰ Aydın, p.275.

¹⁰⁷¹ *The New York Times*, 2 April 1944.

¹⁰⁷² Deringil, p.233.

¹⁰⁷³ The National Archives, WO 204/1505, Telegram from Mideast to Freedom/ Joint Naval Army RAF Intelligence Appreciation, 18 January 1944.

launch an offensive against the region. The suspicion of the Germans about another campaign towards the Dodecanese with the help of the Turks had ascended to such a degree that the Nazis bombed the building of the Turkish Consulate General in Rhodes, in order to intimidate the Turkish government, resulting in the deaths of two consulate officials together with the wife of the Consul General, Selahattin Ülkümen in February 1944.¹⁰⁷⁴

While the Germans were expecting the Turkish belligerency in the first months of 1944, the relationship between Turkey and the Allied countries was far from compromising, as the Germans supposed. Instead, the Turkish negotiations with the Allied military and diplomatic officers had reached an impasse. In the spring of 1944, as Turkey had not decided to enter the war, the British stopped their shipments to Anatolia, stating that Ankara had not fulfilled its duties under the terms of the 1939 treaty.¹⁰⁷⁵

During the period in which the relationship between Turkey and the Allies was in sharp decline, the Allied parties accused Ankara of being the whole reason that the Aegean remained an Axis Sea.¹⁰⁷⁶ In other words, the closure of the Aegean Sea, the security threat of which had been felt by the Turks throughout the war, was regarded both as the reason and the result of the Turkish refusal to war.

When Turkey and the Allies overcame the deadlock and Turkey declared the termination of the diplomatic contacts with Germany in August 1944, based on the necessities of Turkish foreign policy, especially in terms of the future need for support over certain issues such as the ones of the Straits, the position of Turkey in relation to

¹⁰⁷⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Rodos Başkonsolosluğu, “Başkonsololuk Tarihi ve Önceki Başkonsoloslarımız,” <http://rodos.bk.mfa.gov.tr/MissionChiefHistory.aspx>. (accessed February 23, 2014).

¹⁰⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, 3 March 1944.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

the Dodecanese was addressed again in a way that according to the Allies, Turkish airbases would now be effectively used in defeating the Germans on the islands.¹⁰⁷⁷

Therefore, it was not a coincidence that nearly at the same time with the evacuation of Greece, beginning in September 1944, another operation involving the islands, including the Dodecanese, the Cyclades, and northern Aegean ones was discussed. The discussion about the possible use of the Turkish troops in such a liberation task or from another perspective, the probable intention of the Turks to occupy the islands the Germans had evacuated became a subject again.¹⁰⁷⁸ While the Foreign Office emphasized that neither Britain nor Greece could welcome such an involvement,¹⁰⁷⁹ the British officials in Ankara stated that they did not see any signs that Turkey had such intentions.¹⁰⁸⁰

These debates about the islands demonstrated another epoch of the vicious cycle took place throughout the war about the nature of the Turkish intervention on the issue although the British could not handle a proper operation against the Dodecanese without the assistance of the Turks, both due to the necessities of extra troops and equipment and to the geographic characteristics of the region. Parallel to this equation, while the evacuation of Greece was being realized step by step, the actions involving the Dodecanese remained at the level of particular raids.

From October 1944 to May 1945, when the Germans surrendered, the British forces together with Greek commandos made several assaults on the islands. During this

¹⁰⁷⁷ *The New York Times*, 2 August 1944.

¹⁰⁷⁸ At that time, rumours were on the rise about a possible surrender of Lesbos and Chios to Turks. The discussions about a possibility of occupation were stemming from this.

¹⁰⁷⁹ The National Archives, FO 195/2486, Telegram from Foreign Office to Mr Helm, Angora, 19 September 1944, Telegram from Mr. Helm to Foreign Office, 23 September 1944.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Telegram from Foreign Office to Mr. Helm, Angora, 16 September 1944.

period, the Allies seized several islands like Scarpanto and Samos.¹⁰⁸¹ However, beyond the raids usually declared as successful, the Germans continued to control the majority of the islands until May 1945, when Nazi Germany formally surrendered. Within the same month of the surrender, the German troops in the Dodecanese were still able to cause serious casualties on the Allied side during the raids,¹⁰⁸² justifying the Turkish fear about the region.

When the surrender took place on May 1945, Turkey had protected its territory from any assault that could be directed from the Balkans, from the North Eastern frontier, as well as from the Aegean Archipelago. The relationship between the islands and the Turkish mainland during the Second World War indicates that the Dodecanese had always been an important subject during the diplomatic and military negotiations between Ankara and the Allied officials. Since these islands were in an important strategic location not only vis-à-vis Anatolia but also vis-à-vis the Middle East and the Balkans that were vital areas for the fate of the Allied troops, the capture and the control of the islands dominated the agenda in those discussions, which were not free of contradictions and the conflicts, although Turkey implemented a foreign policy of non-belligerency throughout the war and the plans in the minds of the Allied officials could never been realized. As can be seen from the above narrative, the course of events in the region, on the other hand, continued to play a role in the decision of Turkey to stay out of the war.

The Other Side of the Island-Mainland Relationship: Refugees and Humanitarian Assistance

¹⁰⁸¹ The New York Times, 7 October 1944, 19 October 1944.

¹⁰⁸² The New York Times, 5 May 1945, p.5.

The strategic matters had always taken prominence over the other issues with regard to the Dodecanese. This is not surprising if the conditions of the Second World War are kept in mind. But the supremacy of military and diplomatic strategy to protect the country from the devastation of the war regarding not only the Aegean but also the other parts of the country, does not mean that Turkey dealt with the Dodecanesian dynamic only with regard to an attack, capture, or occupation. The documents show that Turkey was concerned with other issues, as well. Two major issues in which Turkey was involved during the war were migration in diverse forms, on the one hand, and humanitarian assistance, on the other hand.

First of all, the migration between the islands and the mainland was a multidimensional phenomenon that had begun long before the outbreak of the Second World War. As was suggested in the previous chapters, after 1935, not only Italian soldiers, but also the members of the Turkish and Greek communities began to flee the islands to the nearest coast for a variety of reasons. While the soldiers were usually deserters running away from being sent to Abyssinia; the Turks and especially the Greeks, sought to flee from the fascist policies of the new governor of the Dodecanese, De Vecchi, who came to the office in 1936.¹⁰⁸³ These movements between the islands and the mainland led to problems between Turkey and Italy, especially in terms of the Greeks and Turks because the governor of the Dodecanese claimed that Ankara was promoting Kemalist sentiments within the Turkish community of the islands while turning a blind eye to Greek fugitives, who were going onto the other Greek islands or to

¹⁰⁸³ For more information about these movements, see Chapter 5.

the Greek mainland from Anatolia.¹⁰⁸⁴ These stories reveal that the movements of the Dodecanesians were not peculiar to the period of the Second World War.

What was new about the migration practices during the war, however, was its character since it was closely related to the war time conditions and its intensity, which could not be compared to the numbers of the interwar period. In this respect, it should also be stated that the migration that was closely associated with the war time circumstances was not confined to 1943, when the Dodecanesian campaign took place, although the literature about the issue has a tendency to analyze the Dodecanesian migration in this manner.¹⁰⁸⁵ This approach is understandable because of the huge flux that occurred during the campaign as well as the nature of the Turkish archival material concerning the previous years, which deals with the issues and the numbers without making separation between the northern Aegean islands and the Dodecanese. However, despite these facts, it is necessary to emphasize that the escape of the people from the Dodecanese Islands began with the entrance of Italy into the war and persisted until the surrender of the Nazis in 1945.

One of the most important reasons for the migration to the mainland was famine. The Dodecanese Islands, with the exception of Rhodes and Kos, did not have sufficient cultivable lands for agriculture to feed the population. The economy of the islands has always depended on the fishing/sponge fishing activities and the trade with Anatolia. As Chapter Four designated, any problem or obstacle in those activities led to economic problems in the islands. Therefore, when Italy became a belligerent country, the fact that

¹⁰⁸⁴ For more information about these movements, see Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸⁵ For example, Esra Danacıoğlu mentions the waves of migration only during 1943. For more information, see Esra Danacıoğlu, "Ege'de Büyük Kaçış: II. Dünya Savaşında Adalardan Türkiye'ye Mülteci Akını," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no.146 (Şubat 2006), pp.50-55.

the trade with the Anatolia decreased led to serious problems in the economy of the islands. From the archival documents, it seems that Britain, while imposing blockade in the region, was attentively following the attitude of Turkey in this respect, to the extent that the British spies in coastal areas like İzmir and Marmaris were writing about the merchants and their activities.¹⁰⁸⁶

Turkey, because of the necessities of its own economy in war conditions, the security problems in the Aegean, and the British attitude, strictly controlled the commercial activities in the coastal areas.¹⁰⁸⁷ Apart from the efforts to suppress smuggling, the Turkish government was also taking decisions to prohibit the export of certain items, like iron drums, with which specific products, like olive oil, were being transported between the islands and the mainland.¹⁰⁸⁸ In other words, the mentality of the Turkish government, which had focused on keeping certain materials useful for Turkey itself within the country, further limited the economic relationship between the Dodecanese and Anatolia, leading to serious problems within the Aegean Archipelago. The fact that the cabinet issued specific decrees that arranged the shipments to the islands for various reasons¹⁰⁸⁹ shows the desire of the Turkish government to control all the commercial transfers between the two coasts.

However, the hunger on the islands was not just tied to the cessation of the island-mainland commercial relations and to the British blockade around the region, but to the Italian administration, which tried to stockpile the basic necessities for the military

¹⁰⁸⁶ For more information, see The National Archives, FO 371/29932.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid., Telegram from Ministry of Economic Warfare to Foreign Office, 11 January 1941.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid., 31 December 1940.

¹⁰⁸⁹ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/169.176..39, 27 July 1942 and 30..10.0.0/169.176..5, 2 February 1942.

needs, generally by taking the provisions of the civilians.¹⁰⁹⁰ An interview that I conducted in 2013 in order to draw a general picture of the war years in the Dodecanese, also indicated this point. The informant, Sadi Nasuhoğlu, a Turk from Rhodes who had lived through the war years, explained that the Italians had occupied his family's farms in order to control the agricultural yields for military purposes.¹⁰⁹¹

Despite the military precautions, both the soldiers and civilians felt hunger in the islands because, in the absence of the interaction with Anatolia, the administration tried to bring weekly dispatches of basic necessities from Italy, but the service was usually disrupted and thus the supplies from the Italian mainland were erratic.¹⁰⁹² Thus, what the Dodecanesians faced after 1940 was strict food rationing imposed on them by the authorities,¹⁰⁹³ although even these limited rations were not distributed regularly. According to the British reports concerning 1940-1941, the food problem on the islands was so acute that the Italian army might have surrendered its troops in the near future.¹⁰⁹⁴

Although the Italians did not surrender as expected at this time, this food shortage led people to flee to the Anatolian coasts. According to the British intelligence, beginning with November 1940, both the Italian soldiers and the civilian people had fled the Dodecanese to the coasts of Anatolia.¹⁰⁹⁵ All of the people coming to Anatolia,

¹⁰⁹⁰ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Political Distribution. From Angora to Foreign Office, 23 November 1941.

¹⁰⁹¹ Sadi Nasuhoğlu, interview by the author, e-mail, 24 August 2013.

¹⁰⁹² The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Political Distribution. From Angora to Foreign Office, 23 November 1941.

¹⁰⁹³ Doumanis, p.56.

¹⁰⁹⁴ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Report, Dodecanese Islands- Economic Conditions and Morale by Director of Naval Intelligence, 13 February 1941.

¹⁰⁹⁵ The National Archives, FO 195/2468, Telegram from British Consulate General (Symirna) to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), 13 November 1940.

including the deserter soldiers, cited hunger as the reason for their act.¹⁰⁹⁶ It should be noted that the archival material on the issue are fragmented and incomplete; therefore, reaching exact figures for the refugees and internees/prisoner of wars coming from the Dodecanese cannot be determined accurately. However, the documents indicate that people were coming from the Dodecanese Islands before 1943.

For example, one of the statistics of *İskân Umum Müdürlüğü* (Administration of Public Settlement) demonstrates that from the spring of 1941 until the spring of 1943, the total number of the Greek refugees leaving the islands, both from the northern Aegean ones which was under the occupation of the Nazis and from the Dodecanese Islands, was 22,909.¹⁰⁹⁷ Although the proportion of this figure regarding the division between the Dodecanese Islands and the northern Greek Islands like Chios, from which mass refugee flows occurred during this period for the same reasons of war and famine,¹⁰⁹⁸ is not clear and although the number contains only the Greeks, this report is important. It shows that the coastal Anatolia regardless of a geographic division was dealing with a serious problem of refugees and how the Turkish government was uncomfortable about this problem.

For the latter phenomenon, the report stated that the government should have taken the necessary civil and military measures in order to prevent further exodus, which was causing thousands of liras of damage to the state budget.¹⁰⁹⁹ These measures were

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁷ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/124.882..4, 8 March 1943.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in the Occupied Greece* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.152-157.

¹⁰⁹⁹ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/124.882..4, 8 March 1943.

directly related to the Turkish declaration in 1942 that Turkey would not accept refugees anymore,¹¹⁰⁰ although this decision would not be imposed properly in practice.

On the other hand, it is seen that Anatolia was not the final destination of these Greek refugees. Ankara implemented specific policies through which the refugees were made to return to the place where they did come, were sent to the Allied refugee camps in Syria and Cyprus or sent to the Allied POW camps in Egypt in case they were soldiers.¹¹⁰¹

The refugee problem was not limited to Greek islanders. Turkish islanders also migrated to the facing mainland. But, the Turkish government dealt with this group in a different way. In this respect, a decree belonging to 1941 states that the people of Turkish kin coming from the Aegean Islands, together with the ones from the Western Thrace before April 1941, would be granted the rights of refugees and immigrants (*serbest göçmen*) since the chances of sending them back to the places from which they were originated were almost nonexistent.¹¹⁰²

Although to what extent the Dodecanesians took the advantage of this decree is questionable since the exact numbers are not known, it is important to note that the path of Turks was different from that of the Greek civilians. But, it also should be emphasized that being classified in the category of immigrants did not necessarily bring freedom to these refugees even if they managed to avoid being sent to the refugee camps in foreign countries, because the government was trying to control this population which should have returned to its hometowns after the war ended. For instance, the Turkish

¹¹⁰⁰ Keser, pp.371-372.

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰² TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..18.1.2/96.72..3, 13 August 1941.

Dodecanesians who migrated from Rhodes and Kos after the war of 1943 were restricted to leave the city of Muğla, which was located just across from these islands.¹¹⁰³

While the movements of the people between the coasts was a problem for Turkish foreign and domestic politics, the economic and the morale conditions of the people, who continued to live on the islands of the Aegean Archipelago was another matter that Turkey had to be involved in throughout the war period. Yet, the assistance made for the Greek mainland and the northern Greek islands because of the great famine that began with the Italian occupation and reached to an unbearable level after that of the Germans generally dominates the academic literature regarding the Turkish aid, especially for the period between 1940 and 1942.¹¹⁰⁴

It is seen that, however, Turkey had made some assistance also to the Dodecanese after the economic difficulties began on the islands. Ankara, which gave orders to suspend the traffic between the Turkish coasts and the Dodecanese, had declared that the Red Crescent had decided to send a supply of food for the children and the hospital as well as for the Turkish Consul, who telegraphed that the staff of the Consulate was struggling with hunger.¹¹⁰⁵ Thereafter, the Red Crescent had sent a dispatch to Rhodes from Marmaris under the name of the Italian Red Cross, consisting

¹¹⁰³ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/124.882..12, 2 May 1945.

¹¹⁰⁴ For more information about the Turkish aids towards the mainland Greece and the Greek islands in front of the Turkish coast, see Ulvi Keser, *Yunanistan'ın Büyük Açlık Dönemi ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2008), Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in the Occupied Greece* (Cambridge, UK; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006), Elçin Macar, *"İşte Geliyor Kurtuluş" : Türkiye'nin II. Dünya Savaşı'nda Yunanistan'a yardımları (1940-1942) Έρχεται το Κούρτουλος : η ανθρωπιστική βοήθεια της Τουρκίας προς την Ελλάδα κατά τον Β' Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο 1940-1942* (İzmir: İzmir Ticaret Odası Kültür Sanat ve Tarih Yayınları, 2009).

¹¹⁰⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir. H. Knatchbull- Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 10 February 1941; Report, Dodecanese Islands- Economic Conditions and Morale by Director of Naval Intelligence, 13 February 1941.

of rice, olive oil, sugar, fish, and livestock (goats) worth five thousand Turkish liras.¹¹⁰⁶

The access of the Dodecanesians to food during these years did not take place only in terms of the aid made by the Red Crescent. That is to say, although the Turkish General Staff prohibited the sailing of Turkish commercial ships within foreign waters and although the same institution imposed tough fines on people who sustained commercial relationship with the islands, the Turkish ships did carry some food such as fish, with the special permission of the Turkish authorities.¹¹⁰⁷ After occasional telegrams from the Dodecanese in order to import food from Turkey,¹¹⁰⁸ Ankara sometimes made exceptions in regard to commercial activities in order to provide some relief to the region even if these activities did not clearly fall under the category of humanitarian assistance, such as that of the Red Crescent.

Although the above-mentioned data show that the issues of refugees and the assistance concerning the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese had existed since the Italian belligerency, a massive exodus of the Dodecanesian population and the Italian and German soldiers began with the British campaign in the region in 1943 as well as during the Nazi occupation after which the famine conditions in the islands steadily deteriorated.

Doumanis argues that the Nazi occupation of the islands left the deepest mark on the history of the Dodecanese, since it was associated with the unprecedented starvation

¹¹⁰⁶ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/178.234..21, 17 March 1941.

¹¹⁰⁷ In order to see some of the permissions that the Turkish state issued, see TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/169.176..39, 27 July 1942 and 30..10.0.0/169.176..5, 2 February 1942.

¹¹⁰⁸ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 23 November 1941.

and violence on the islands.¹¹⁰⁹ Indeed, during our interview, Suna Hamit, who was a little girl in Rhodes during the war, specifically emphasized her memory of people with starvation edema dying in the streets.¹¹¹⁰ Orhan Moralı, one of my another interviewee described the change in their dietary habits, like the introduction of horse meat, snails, and frogs within the absence of other protein sources, such as poultry and fish owing to the diminution, even the cessation, of fishing activities on the islands.¹¹¹¹ The conditions of the soldiers were not different either. Nasuhoğlu, whose family farms were under Italian occupation during the war as stated above, spoke of the similarity of conditions between the civil people and the Axis soldiers after 1943: “they (the German soldiers) were starving; they ate the cats, dogs and rats in the streets as well as all animals in the zoo.”¹¹¹²

Therefore, it was no coincidence that the state of war in the region together with the deteriorating food shortage led people to flee the Dodecanese to the Anatolian mainland in greater numbers in 1943 than in the previous years of the war. The figures vary among the sources. For instance, while Danacıoğlu suggests that total 19,735 refugees came to Turkey between September and November 1943, Keser argues that 9079 people came to the Anatolian coasts, especially to Marmaris, Bodrum, and Kaş.¹¹¹³ Although these numbers are very different from each other, they cannot be ignored if the 120,000 total civilian population, as counted in 1936 together with the 50,000 troops which had occasionally changed throughout the Second World War, are kept in mind.

¹¹⁰⁹ Doumanis, p.58-59.

¹¹¹⁰ Suna Hamit, Interview by the author, tape recording, 30 September 2013. Istanbul, Turkey.

¹¹¹¹ Orhan Moralı, Interview by the author, tape recording, 1 October 2013. Istanbul, Turkey.

¹¹¹² Sadi Nasuhoğlu, interview by the author, e-mail, 24 August 2013.

¹¹¹³ Quoted by Tekeli and İlkin, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si*, p.638.

Turkish archival sources demonstrate that after the surrender of Italy in September 1943, the number of Italian soldiers who came to the Anatolian coast reached almost to one thousand just within two days.¹¹¹⁴ Likewise, more than one thousand people including British soldiers entered Turkey nearly within a week in November when the Germans began to take the control of the Dodecanese.¹¹¹⁵ While the major group from the category of civilians was the Greeks, the Italians were predominant in terms of the soldiers.¹¹¹⁶ All of these refugees, with the exception of the Turkish ones, were kept in camps in which they waited for their transfers to the Middle Eastern camps of the Allies.

Turkey was uncomfortable with the refugee problem from the perspective of economics and domestic politics. Therefore, the aim of the Turks was either to prevent the landings or their rapid transfer to the camps other than the ones in Turkey. As a result, when the number increased, as the figures concerning the September and November 1943 show, Turkey began to stiffen its position towards new refugees because even if a major wave of migration had already taken place within this time period, the situation in the islands demonstrated that the exodus would continue. Indeed, the British reports of late November which problematized the admission of another 19,000 refugees from the Dodecanese directly to Palestine designate the severity of the matter well.¹¹¹⁷

¹¹¹⁴ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/55.367..23, 14-15 September 1943.

¹¹¹⁵ TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/55.367..40, 29 November 1943.

¹¹¹⁶ Tekeli and İlkin, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si*, p.638.

¹¹¹⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/36746, Telegram from Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 26 November 1943.

In terms of finances, however, Ankara had already expressed in 1940 that the Allies had to take the responsibility for the refugees.¹¹¹⁸ With the occasional emphasis on this fact, Turkey was able to obtain the assistance of the Allies after the matter reached a level that was far beyond the capabilities of Ankara although during the first years Turkey had to deal with the expenditure of the camps with its own budget.¹¹¹⁹ It should be emphasized that the attitude of Turkey in terms of the finance of the refugee problem had irritated Britain, which needed to remind the matter even after end of the war.¹¹²⁰

After the campaign in 1943, the above-mentioned expectations about the persistence of the migration from the Dodecanese materialized because despite the fact that the campaign was over, the absence of general food including bread led people to escape from the islands. According to the Greek reports, during the first two months of 1944, at least 20,000 people fled from the Dodecanese.¹¹²¹ However, the word “escape” can hardly be used for the actions of these refugees. That is to say, the German officials, who had declared that they would defend the Dodecanese until the last man, were handing out exit permits easily, taking the food shortage in the islands into the consideration.¹¹²² But, the majority of these groups could not take refuge in Turkey, which had decided to implement its former decision not to accept further refugees.¹¹²³

¹¹¹⁸ The National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from Sir M. Peterson to Foreign Office, 5 April 1945.

¹¹¹⁹ Keser, p.193-197.

¹¹²⁰ The National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from Sir M. Peterson to Foreign Office, 5 April 1945.

¹¹²¹ Lena Divani and Photini Constantopoulou (eds.) *The Dodecanese: The long road to union with Greece: Diplomatic Documents from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1997), pp.154-155.

¹¹²² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, “*Notizie da Rodi*,” (Information from Rhodes), 13 January 1945, 25 January 1945.

¹¹²³ Ibid.

Therefore, after 1943, Turkey did not give the authorizations necessary to land in Turkish ports for most of the refugees, who stayed on their boats and were helped mainly by the British authorities who facilitated their voyages to Cyprus or Syria, as well as their settlements in those regions.¹¹²⁴

There were exceptions to Ankara's restrictive policy. While the Dodecanesian Turks continued to be permitted to take refuge in Muğla, the local authorities also accepted other groups especially in the emergency cases,¹¹²⁵ like sinking of boats, which often took place in the geographic and climatic conditions of the Aegean Archipelago. Another important exception to the general attitude of Ankara involved the Jewish community of the Dodecanese Islands. Actually, this issue went far beyond a reluctant acceptance and turned into a thorough struggle.

In July 1944, the Nazis had ordered the deportation of the Dodecanesian Jewish population, who had numbered approximately 4000 before the war and lived mainly on Rhodes and Kos.¹¹²⁶ When the history of the Dodecanesian Jews during the Second World War is searched, it is seen that the resources usually emphasize two significant points. The first is that only 150 Dodecanesian Jews survived Auschwitz, which put almost an end to the island community.¹¹²⁷

The second point is the effort of Turkish consul Selahattin Ülkümen on Rhodes to save the Jewish people from going to concentration camps. Indeed, Ülkümen is known as the Turkish Schindler, because he saved 42 Jews from Auschwitz by issuing

¹¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹¹²⁶ For a more detailed narrative of deportation, see Rhodes Jewish Museum, "Holocaust," <http://www.rhodesjewishmuseum.org/history/holocaust> (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹¹²⁷ Ibid. It should be noted that there are recently only a couple of Jewish families living in Rhodes.

Turkish passports for them and by helping them escape to Anatolia.¹¹²⁸ In this sense, the oral testimonies of the survivors usually indicate the courage of the Turkish consul.¹¹²⁹ While Israil declared Ülkümen as one of the “Righteous among the Nations,” he states in his memoirs that “it was not only my diplomatic mission, but also my debt to humanity and my responsibility to my conscience above all.”¹¹³⁰ Therefore, with his courage together with the assistance of the government, the Jews, as Turkish citizens, became another group that was able to migrate to Turkey after 1943, even if their group were small in number and even if this action did not save all of the Dodecanesian Jews.

When the Second World War ended with the surrender of Germany, the Dodecanesian people who had fled began to return to their countries. At that time, the fate of the Dodecanese had not been officially declared yet in terms of sovereignty. According to the Italian reports, both Greece and Turkey, which were regarded as two possible claimants of the islands, supported their cognates to return the islands as soon as possible in order to be seen legitimate in their assertions and in order to constitute the

¹¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹¹²⁹ One of such testimonies belongs to Giamila Tarica, who stated “*Only those who have trembled in the presence of the SS are able to fully appreciate the courage of Signor Selahattin Ülkümen. To put himself, humanely, in the way of the ferocious beasts - las belvas ferozes - and to pull their victims away from their claws was an act of supreme heroism. Il Signor S. Ülkümen was one of the few who ever experienced that satisfaction*” quoted by Nathan Shachar, *The Lost World of Rhodes: Greeks, Italians, Jews, and Turks: Between Tradition and Modernity* (Brighton; Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), p.227.

¹¹³⁰ Selahattin Ülkümen, *Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle Bir Dönemin Dışışleri: Emekli Diplomat Selahattin Ülkümen'in Anıları* (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik basın ve Yayın A.Ş, 1993), p.115. Righteous Among the Nations is an honour that Israel gives to those who risked their lives in order to save Jews. It should also be stated that Ulkumen has also been honoured in Turkey where, in 2012 the Jewish community constructed a school in Van after the earthquake and gave the name of the Consul to the school. The head of community said that “by naming this school after Ulkumen, we wanted to express our thanks to him once again.” Turkish Jewish Community, “Primary School for Van from the Jewish Community of Turkey,” <http://www.turkyahudileri.com/content/view/2018/227/lang,en/> (accessed October 28, 2013).

majority of the population in case of a plebiscite.¹¹³¹ British reports of September 1945 indicate that the majority of the islanders returned and the remaining refugees, who numbered 5090 in Nuseirat, 400 in Greece, 690 on Cyprus and 1000 in Turkey, were expected to arrive on their islands either in the same month or as soon as the necessary transport become available.¹¹³² The problem of the Dodecanesian refugees in Turkey came to an end with the repatriation of the islanders at the end of October 1945.¹¹³³

At the same time as the refugee flux from the Dodecanese occupied the agenda of Ankara in 1943, Turkish foreign policy was also engaged with the issue of supplies for the islands. As was stated above, beginning with 1940, the food shortage on the islands had attracted the attention of the Turkish officials who had made some arrangements for civilian purposes. However, with the British campaign over the Dodecanese in 1943, the supply of food for the region gained a militaristic dimension. As was suggested above, although Turkey insisted on not giving any airbases during the campaign, it helped the Allied forces as in the case of assistance by the Red Crescent in carrying petroleum and ammunition to the British forces on the islands as if it were the civilian relief work.¹¹³⁴

Apart from the arms and ammunitions, the Red Crescent convoys were also involved with the supplies of food, yet, with a much more military focus. It also should be emphasized that the relationship between Turkey and Britain was tense over these food transfers because of Turkey's reluctance to provide supplies making excuses

¹¹³¹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, "*Notizie dal Dodecanneso*," (Information from the Dodecanese), 25 Temmuz 1945.

¹¹³² The National Archives, FO 371/48428, Monthly Report by Hedquarters BMA Dodecanese, 17 September 1945.

¹¹³³ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, "*Appunto*," (Notes), 23 October 1945.

¹¹³⁴ The National Archives, CAB 120/502, Telegram From Angora to Foreign Office, 21 September 1943.

against which the British put pressure, reminding the Turks of the British cereal transfer made to Turkey during 1942 at a critical time.¹¹³⁵ After occasional British evocations about the previous Allied assistances made to Turkey together with the Turkish position of an ally rather an indifferent neutral country,¹¹³⁶ Ankara agreed to make the necessary transfer of rations to the islands for the use of the Allied troops.

Apart from military supplies, Turkey was also actively involved in the humanitarian assistance carried out for the Dodecanese. However, this aid was different from the ones made before 1943 in a way that the efforts were not individual but within close cooperation with the Red Cross and the Allies. And, they could be made only when the Germans gave necessary permissions. Therefore, it seen that preparations for any relief action did not take place until September 1944 when the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) committee decided that the Dodecanese should receive aid owing to the conditions on the islands similar to the situation on the mainland Greece in 1942.¹¹³⁷

Actually, the Dodecanese was not a monolithic enemy occupied area at the end of 1944. Although the three key islands, Rhodes, Kos, and Leros were still German, the British had taken some of the minor islands, like Karpathos. Therefore, the Allies, the Red Cross, the UNRRA, and the Turkish government began to make efforts for these British occupied islands, beginning with September 1944. In this respect, for example,

¹¹³⁵ Ibid. 17 September 1943, 19 September 1943.

¹¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹¹³⁷ *The Times*, 25 September 1944.

during the October, the Turkish government ordered its military personnel to take out tons of foodstuff from storages on the request of the British to send to the islands.¹¹³⁸

However, the relief for the other islands, especially for Rhodes, could be made only after January 1945, when the German authorities contacted about the necessity to feed the civilian population and about their promise of “safe conduct” in case of assistance.¹¹³⁹ After this signal of Germany to the International Red Cross, the officials of this institution together with those of the Allies asked Turkey whether the one million liras raised in Turkey for the relief of Greece could be used for civilian aid to the Dodecanese.¹¹⁴⁰ Turkey agreed and also permitted the use of Turkish ports for the operation and provided the necessary ships, which wore the emblem of the Red Cross.¹¹⁴¹

The food aid to the Dodecanese continued in a frequent manner thereafter.¹¹⁴² In all those actions Turkey worked cooperatively with the international organizations and with the Allies in coordination in a way that it became the centre in which all the humanitarian issues concerning the Dodecanese were handled. For instance, the officials from these organizations administrated the process from İzmir with the special permission by Ankara,¹¹⁴³ and were in close coordination with both the government and their colleagues with the Red Crescent. The Red Crescent played an active role during

¹¹³⁸ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 5-043/1-6, 5 October 1944.

¹¹³⁹ The National Archives, WO 201/1762, Telegram from Athens to Foreign Office, 14 January 45.

¹¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁴¹ Ibid., Telegram from Angora to Athens, 17 January 1945.

¹¹⁴² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, “*Situazione nel Dodecanneso*,” (Situation in the Dodecanese), 7 Mayıs 1945. According to the Italian officials, every month two despatches arrived the Dodecanese carrying butter, flour, oats, salt, meat in can, beans, milk, medicine, and fish oil.

¹¹⁴³ Genelkurmay ATASE Daire Başkanlığı Arşivi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Belgeleri, 5-043/1-6, 1-5 October 1944.

this process, especially in terms of the Dodecanesian Turkish community's access to the humanitarian assistance.¹¹⁴⁴

Obviously, the major reasons for the famine, humanitarian assistance, and the refugee problem were the termination of the commercial relations between the islands and the Turkish mainland together with the war time implementations of the warring parties. Therefore, when the Second World War was over in the Dodecanese with the surrender of the German forces in May 1945, in addition to the continuance of the food and money assistance to the islands, one of the first moves of the British administration was the re-foundation of trade with Anatolia through the formation of a Chamber of Commerce in Rhodes.¹¹⁴⁵ In this way, the extraordinary conditions between two coasts seemed to come to an end with the second half of 1945, bringing the previous dynamics to the economic relations between Turkey and the Dodecanese.

When the Second World War ended, Turkey left one of the most difficult epochs of its history behind. Despite its non-belligerent status, the Turkish government had to deal with multiple problems in its diplomacy and security policy. In this sense, as the above pages demonstrated, the Dodecanese Islands constituted one of the complicated dynamics of the Turkish foreign and security policy also in this era. This chapter showed that from beginning to the end, the islands in the Aegean Archipelago were on the agenda of the Turks, both from the perspective of its security and from the perspective

¹¹⁴⁴ Especially in terms of the distribution of the foodstuffs to the Turkish community, see TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30..10.0.0/179.236..9, 18 April 1945.

¹¹⁴⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/48428, Monthly Report by Hedquarters BMA Dodecanese, 17 September 1945.

of its diplomatic relationship with the Allies. Ankara, which had become allies with the British and the French in 1939 based on the Dodecanese dynamic of the interwar Turkish foreign policy, discussed military plans concerning the islands in 1939 and 1940. These two years can be associated with the “pending” status of Turkey since its position in the war was not precise, due to the uncertainty of war in the Mediterranean until Italy declared war.

However, even after Turkey adapted non-belligerency a result of the multiple considerations with regard to the security of the Turkish borders, the Dodecanese did remain on the agenda of the parties until the end of the war. The Aegean Archipelago, both for Turkey and for the Allies, became the subject of conflictual arguments in terms of foreign policy and military strategy of the respective parties. For example, while Turkey usually constituted its general strategy from a defensive perspective according to which the islands were a source of danger that could be directed against Anatolia, it continued to deal with the plans of invasion with the Allied parties. Likewise, Britain, which usually wanted to attack the islands with the help of the Turkish troops, also considered the clearance of the Dodecanese from the Nazis as the only way to bring the Turks into the war in 1943. Furthermore, the fear of the Foreign Office about the future claims of Turkey in the region if it got involved in the action did not hinder the military officials from thinking about bribing Turkey with the islands if it entered the war. And, while Turkish political circles reiterated that they did not have any territorial claims, military officers negotiated an attack on the Dodecanese rather than the islands close to the Straits at the end of 1943, possibly for future claims. These paradoxes continued throughout the war, sometimes based on the developments on the war fronts, yet

sometimes based on the diverse point of views dominant in the various institutions of each state.

Another fact that was operative throughout the war was the importance of the Dodecanese for Turkish security and foreign policy. In nearly every negotiation between the Allies and Turkey, the Dodecanese was discussed because the area was not only close to the southwestern Anatolia, but also was along the way to the Straits and the Balkans, where the Axis dominated until 1944. Therefore, the islands were important for Turkey not only in itself, but also from a holistic security perspective of Ankara which had interlinked Thrace with the Aegean.

Likewise, for the Allied powers, the significance of the region had stemmed from its broader implications regarding the Middle East, in addition to its impact on Turkey and the Balkans. The Axis perspective reflected a similar understanding, which kept the islands until the end, since the region was on the way to the Balkans and the Middle East, as well as had influences in Turkish position. It is no coincidence that the Germans also put the islands onto the negotiation table from time to time, even if in a vaguer mode than the Allies, since the Nazis had thought that they could affect the Turkish understanding, as the Allied parties considered. Even if the attitude of the parties did not change the general foreign policy understanding of Ankara after all, it should be emphasized that Turkish foreign and security policy took the situation in the Dodecanese into consideration until the end.

As was explained, the place of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy was not limited by the politics of war either. In this respect, the refugee problem from the Dodecanese occupied the agenda of Turkey during the Second World War. While Turkey tried to cope with the refugees as much as it could with its financial,

political and local dynamics, it also provided aid for the islands, sent humanitarian assistance to the region, and became a center for the aid under the control of the Allies, the UNRRA, and the Red Cross, revealing that the relationship between the islands and the mainland also had such different aspects, though the problematic nature of it persisted in every respect.

CHAPTER 7

THE END OF AN ERA: THE TRANSITION OF THE ISLANDS TO GREECE AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1944-1947

When the Second World War ended, Turkey got over one of the most difficult periods of the Turkish history even if it had not been a warring party. Throughout the war, Turkey had dealt with the diplomatic pressure that the belligerent countries exerted, the threat of sudden attack and occupation from the different parts of its territory, severe economic difficulties, and social discomfort related to the preceding problems. But, the end of the war symbolized a new era for the whole world, as did for Turkey: The global scale of war and violence came to an end, the Turkish political system was on the way in terms of transition to a multi-party system,¹¹⁴⁶ and recovery in Turkish economy was expected.¹¹⁴⁷ However, the relief that the end of the war epitomized for Turkey was not in an absolute manner in the conditions of 1945.

One of the most significant matters in this respect was connected to Turkish foreign policy. On the one hand, Turkey had come out of the war as an isolated country, since Britain was estranged from Ankara based on the latter's attitude in the war in order to remain non-belligerent, while the United States was rather indifferent to the

¹¹⁴⁶ For more information about the transition to democracy, see Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, pp.206-218, Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi Sürecinde Türkiye: 1945-1980* (İstanbul: Hil, 1996), pp.15-31.

¹¹⁴⁷ For a detailed account the postwar Turkish economy see Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, pp.93-106, İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Savaş Sonrası Ortamında 1947 Türkiye İktisadi Kalkınma Planı* (Ankara: Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, 1974), pp.1-15.

Mediterranean affairs.¹¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, Ankara was faced with the threat of the Soviet Union. During 1945, the USSR had annulled the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality of 1925 between Turkey and Russia, desired an alteration in the Straits regime through which the Moscow would gain control of the region, demanded bases there, and claimed the cities of Kars and Ardahan in the Eastern Anatolia.¹¹⁴⁹

Actually, during their meetings, the Allied powers had begun to discuss those issues, especially the one of the Straits, long before 1945. Sander argues that from the end of the Second World War to 1947, the most important parameter of Turkish foreign policy was the combination of the Soviet threat, which had begun during the war and took a concrete form in 1945 with the post-war isolation of Turkey.¹¹⁵⁰

This chapter argues that Ankara handled the issue of the Dodecanese sovereignty based on this parameter. Turkey, facing the Soviet threat, needed the British and American support, and these two favored the Greek claims. In addition, the Soviets, much similar to the ones from the Straits, desired bases from the Dodecanese as well, in the Paris Peace Conference in 1945. In other words, the issue of the Dodecanese sovereignty went beyond a simple transfer of the islands to a specific claimant. It is in this condition that Turkey did not officially claim the islands. Therefore, this dissertation argues that the matter needs an approach to discuss the problem with taking the general conditions of Turkey into consideration, since the fate of the islands, though discussed throughout the war, was officially finalized in this epoch.

¹¹⁴⁸ Zeki Kunalalp, *İkinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Dış Siyaseti* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1982), p.89.

¹¹⁴⁹ For an account of these developments, see Gürün, pp.276-286.

¹¹⁵⁰ Oral Sander, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, 1947-1964* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1979), p.8.

This chapter opposes the existing literature and discourses on Turkish foreign policy which is usually criticized both on the basis of its inactive attitude to have the sovereignty of the Dodecanese Islands, and on the basis of a monolithic understanding that thinks the island issue in itself.¹¹⁵¹ Instead, it suggests that Turkey was in a difficult diplomatic environment and thus the Turkish politicians actually behaved in a consistent way on the issue beginning with September 1945: declaration on not having a desire to take or give any territory. Yet, it also says that this official understanding based on the necessity of the day, does not mean that Turkey ignored the fate of the islands. On the contrary, whenever the conditions were appropriate, it examined the matter in private meetings or correspondence, or at least generated a public opinion through press.

However, while arguing that the dynamics of the post-war period were determinant in the Turkish attitude, this chapter also suggests that even if Turkey had not been challenged by diplomatic and security difficulties after the end of the Second World War, it did not have a great chance to take the islands based on the discussions

¹¹⁵¹ There are not many studies in Turkish historiography that specifically deal with the Dodecanese. However, for instance, in an article, Necdet Hayta suggests that the Turkish press and official circles were passive during the summer of 1945, while the Greeks were active. For the article, see Hayta. But, newspaper columns and articles have constituted and re-constituted the discourse without a serious archival research. Many of them, beginning from the 1970s until today, stress the mistake of the Turkish politicians about the “loss” of the islands, mainly not taking the other foreign policy concerns of Turkey into consideration. For an example, see Turgut Özal’s explanations over the islands in 1991, “İnönü’nün yerinde olsam Oniki Ada’yı alırdım,” *Sabah*, 8 May 1991. Some of the articles, on the other hand, depend on the vague offers of the Germans, like Bülent Erandaç, “Türkiye Ege Adaları Fırsatını Nasıl Kaçırıldı,” *Takvim*, 20 July 2010, http://www.takvim.com.tr/Yazarlar/erandac/2010/07/20/turkiye_ege_adalari_firsatini_nasil_kacirildi (accessed October 17, 2014). Moreover, some of them wrongly argue that Turkey had been invited to the Peace Conferences to discuss the issue, but had rejected the offer, although the Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Feridun Cemal Erkin disavowed such information. To read one of them see “12 Adayı Nasıl Kaybettik? Bilinmeyenler Gün Işığına Çıkıyor,” http://www.izlenenhaber.com/haberdetay/12-ADAYI-NASIL-KAYBETTİK_-BILINMEYENLER-GUN-ISIGINA-CIKIYOR/320 (accessed October 18, 2014). The examples can be multiplied and some of them would be explained below.

made during the war. These discussions display that both Britain and the US supported the Greek claims for a while, mostly owing to the ethnic composition of the islands, despite the fact that they constituted an important element of war-time negotiations also between Turkey and the Allied parties, especially based on military terms. In this sense, in order to understand the issue with all the details, it is necessary to show the comprehensive map of the evolution of the Dodecanese question during the war, before dealing with the post-war settlement of the issue.

Fragile Balances: The Discussions on the Dodecanese until 1944

In the previous chapter, it was explained that Turkey and the Allies discussed plans for occupation over the Dodecanese between the 1939 and 1940. Despite the plans concerning the capture, no discussions about the administration of the islands after their occupation took place between the parties. The rise of the question with regard to the Turkish and Greek claims came to the surface at the end of 1940, when Greece became a warring party with the attack of Italy, while the situation in the islands did not seem promising for the Italian forces due to famine. It has already been discussed that as Italy was unable to progress on mainland Greece, the surrender of the islands to Turkey was being discussed more and more as a possible option due to the abovementioned difficulties in the islands.¹¹⁵² As a result of the Italian weakness in the region, the Germans began to be interested in the islands of the Aegean Archipelago, owing to their

¹¹⁵² The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 21 January 1941.

strategic importance in the Mediterranean.¹¹⁵³ Such intelligence from the Aegean had led the British to open the Dodecanesian file concerning the capture of the islands one more time. According to them, the threat of Germany towards the Aegean Archipelago had made the capture of the islands urgently necessary for Britain, Greece, and Turkey.¹¹⁵⁴

Therefore, throughout 1941 the fate of the Dodecanese was discussed not only within the Foreign Office, but also between Britain, Turkey, and Greece. Different from the previous negotiations, this time, the major point of argument was about the nature of the administration that would be composed after the capture of the islands because it could prove or challenge the claims of both Turkey and Greece on the Dodecanese. The point of departure in this discussion was the desire of Britain to employ Greek troops in the Dodecanesian campaign, which Turkey precisely opposed.¹¹⁵⁵

The British authorities wanted to use the Greek troops that were more or less three thousand people with local knowledge, but also assured Turkey that it would not use Greek nationals in the administration that would be established after the capture.¹¹⁵⁶ With this discussion between the parties, Pandora's Box was opened. In the following months and years, whenever the issue of the Dodecanese was being dealt with in terms of the clearing the islands from the Axis powers, the sovereignty problem would come after the capture debates.

¹¹⁵³ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from M. Palaret (Athens) to Foreign Office, Foreign Office Minutes, 20 January, 21 January 1941.

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 16 January 1941.

¹¹⁵⁶ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 21 January 1941, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 14 January 1941.

In this sense, grasping the position of the parties is important especially in order to see the continuities and breaks in each discourse throughout the period. The Greek authorities as well as the public opinion claimed the Dodecanese specifically depending on the Greek majority over the total population as well as on the historical ties.¹¹⁵⁷ According to the Greek officials, the involvement of Greek troops in the Dodecanesian campaign was not as important as the Turks paid attention since the islands would be Greek sooner or later.¹¹⁵⁸

On the other hand, Turkey, stating its position against the Greek troops in the campaign, reiterated that Britain should have captured the Dodecanese and the sovereignty of the islands should have been negotiated after the end of the war.¹¹⁵⁹ However, in a meeting with the British Ambassador, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs also emphasized that Turkey did not have any intent to leave the Turkish people under an alien rule, especially in terms of Rhodes and Kos.¹¹⁶⁰ The Greek politicians challenged this argument. They counter-argued that the Turks could not claim the islands based on the self-determination principle, since the majority of the population in the Dodecanese was “purely” Greek.¹¹⁶¹

Actually, population was the least factor that the Turks used in their arguments. Turkey grounded its claims chiefly on strategy and the historical linkages. According to the officials of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducting diplomatic negotiations

¹¹⁵⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 25 January 1941.

¹¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁹ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1941.

¹¹⁶⁰ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 2 January 1941.

¹¹⁶¹ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from M. Palairot (Athens) to Foreign Office, 5 January 1941.

with the British and the Greeks, all these islands would have been given to Turkey, not to Greece, if they had not been under the occupation of Italy in 1922.¹¹⁶² Turkey frequently referred that the Dodecanese had never belonged to Greece; it had been part of the Ottoman Empire until the twentieth century. In addition to the historical assertions of the Turks, the strategic importance of the islands in relation to the Anatolian territory occupied a significant place for the Turkish claims. For instance, Turkish officials emphasized the military bases that existed in the islands, like the naval base in Leros, suggesting that they would constitute an important security threat against the Anatolian coasts, as they did in the previous era.¹¹⁶³ All of these arguments show that Turkey dealt with the issue actively beginning with the first years of the Second World War.

Indeed, the active diplomacy of Turkey could be seen not only with the British but also with the Greeks. In this respect, Ankara and Athens conducted diplomatic negotiations in order to settle the question, but these discussions yielded no result. The British reported that those meetings reached an impasse due to the tough position of Greece, which had stressed that the Greeks could not discuss the sovereignty of any Dodecanesian islands other than Kastellorizo.¹¹⁶⁴

Thereafter, Turkey declared that it was unworthy to communicate with Metaxas one more time, due to his stubborn stance.¹¹⁶⁵ According to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey was flexible in every matter, as long as Greece could show a

¹¹⁶² The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1941.

¹¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁴ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 29 September 1941.

¹¹⁶⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1941.

similar attitude.¹¹⁶⁶ However, he also pointed out that unless the Greek behavior would change in the future, Turkey would claim all the islands, displaying the same stubbornness.¹¹⁶⁷ This declaration of Turkey demonstrates that Ankara had formulated a design through which Greece and Turkey would share the islands according to their interests, while the position of Athens shows that the only island that could be negotiated with the Turks was Kastellorizo, which was the closest island to the Anatolian territory.

Since the relationship between Turkey and Greece began to demonstrate signs of distress about the islands in a critical moment of the war, the explicit stance of Britain was constituted on the basis of postponement of the negotiations to the end of the war, because if the problem was left to Greece and Turkey for a suitable settlement at the moment, it would probably lead to tension between these two countries.¹¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, despite the neutral attitude of Britain at least in the diplomatic appearance, the problem started a series of discussions in the Foreign Office.

It is seen from the correspondence that the majority of the officials supported the Greek claims, which should have been ensured, at least secretly, since Greece was fighting on behalf of the Allies.¹¹⁶⁹ According to the British, the majority of the islands should have been Greek after the end of the war, not only because London owed this to Athens due to the effort of the latter in the war, but also because the islanders undoubtedly were wishing to be united with Greece.¹¹⁷⁰ The British Ambassador in Ankara, Hugessen had already asked the Turks not to say anything that could demoralize

¹¹⁶⁶ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, , Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 16 January 1941.

¹¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁸ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Foreign Office to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), 14 January 1941.

¹¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁷⁰ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 25 January 1941.

the Greeks in this epoch of war, to which Turkey was not a party on the contrary.¹¹⁷¹ In spite of the Turkish answer, through which Ankara emphasized the assistance that Turkey was making even if it was not a belligerent,¹¹⁷² the discussions continued for a long period of time.

Although the final decision of those deliberations was the postponement of the issue to a future date as was suggested above, it was clear from those correspondences that the British position had favored the Greek claims long before 1945. This dissertation argues that in addition to the ethnic composition of the Dodecanese and the active involvement of the Greeks in the war, the British colonial calculations were also important in this orientation. The focal point of those calculations was the future of Cyprus because according to Britain, Cyprus was in the mind of the Greeks, who were just tactful enough not to raise it under the existing conditions.¹¹⁷³ In other words, London had to satisfy the Greeks either with the Dodecanese or with Cyprus because if they did not realize one of these aspirations, Britain would have to deal with the both two issues in the future.¹¹⁷⁴ As could be understood, Britain regarded the Dodecanese as hush money for Cyprus, which was under the British colonial rule at that time. It should be emphasized that the Cyprus issue would be opened also in 1945, yet although Greece would claim both the Dodecanese and Cyprus; it would then accept that the latter case

¹¹⁷¹ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Telegram from Sir. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Foreign Office, 2 January 1941.

¹¹⁷² Ibid.

¹¹⁷³ The National Archives, FO 371/29932, Foreign Office Minutes, 29 September 1941.

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

was a bilateral one that specifically related to London and Athens,¹¹⁷⁵ not insisting on too much.

Although the expected capture of the islands did not take place, as was discussed in the previous chapter, the fate of the Dodecanese continued to be an important topic. In this respect, it is important to note that the sole discussion on the future of the islands did not take place between Turkey, Britain, and Greece. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were also involved in the matter from time to time, particularly with the aim of approaching Turkey depending on the states of affairs during the war.

For instance, during the same year that the British Foreign Office had held the above-mentioned discussions, the Nazis were trying to use the islands in order to gain the rights to transfer arms through Anatolia to Iraq in 1941, as the previous chapter showed. Although the islands in this offer were not obvious since both von Papen and Ribbentrop used the general term of the “Aegean Islands” and although it did not yield any result since the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and Turkey had been signed without the rights the German wanted, this example of discussing islands with Turkey was not the first or the last attempt of Germany.

Another example involving the islands, this time particularly the Dodecanese, was the Soviet involvement in the issue in December 1941. During a conference in

¹¹⁷⁵ Stephen G. Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers 1944-1947, Prelude to the Truman Doctrine* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), pp.40-41. Many excerpts from Greek historiography also underline this attitude of Athens in terms of not insisting too much on Cyprus, yet they occasionally emphasize that the reason behind this was the Dodecanese was the most important issue for Greece at that time, in other words, more important than Cyprus. For such an example, see Andreas Mavridis, “Η Ρόδος από την Οθωμανική Αυτοκρατορία μέχρι την Εθνικής Ολοκλήρωσης (1912-1947) Ο Μητροπολίτης Ρόδου, Απόστολος (1913-1946), Εκκλησία και Εκπαίδευση,” (Rhodes from the Ottoman Empire until the National Unification (1912-1947), The Metropolitan Bishop Apostolos (1913-1946), Church and Education) (Ph.D. Thesis, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, 2009).

Moscow, Stalin said to Eden that in the future settlement Turkey should take the Dodecanese Islands.¹¹⁷⁶ The Turkish officials who had been informed about this statement could not make sense of this attitude at the time, yet interpreted that if the Soviets made such an offer, they would probably demand something involving the Straits, as the soft spot of the bilateral relationship.¹¹⁷⁷

I think two evaluations could be made from the statement of Stalin. First of all, as the Turkish officials thought, Moscow planned to make changes in the Straits regime and to gain bases in the region in the postwar period, and therefore was supported the Turks in the Dodecanese in return. This estimation is concerned with the postwar period. Second, in that phase of the war, in other words, during the Soviet-Nazi clash, Moscow sought to contrive for the Turkish involvement in the war, or assistance about the Straits, or at least prevent Turkey from collaborating Germany, which was pressuring Ankara at that time.

Britain discussed the idea of offering Turkey islands in return for some diplomatic or military contribution during the war, yet within the British political circles. When the above-mentioned position of Britain is kept in mind, it is no surprising to see that the ideas were contradictory. Britain tried to persuade Turkey to enter the war, discussed the probable necessity to promise some of the islands to this end, and from another perspective, wanted to charge the Turkish troops with specific tasks concerning

¹¹⁷⁶ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1942. *Europe*, vol.3, "Memorandum," 4 February 1942, p.508.
<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=header&id=FRUS.FRUS1942v03&q1> (accessed January 12, 2014).

¹¹⁷⁷ Armaoğlu, pp.163-164.

the Dodecanese campaign; yet, it also considered the possible repercussions of any involvement of Turkey in the region.¹¹⁷⁸

This situation stemmed from the different perspectives of the diplomatic and military officials because while the former were concerned with the diplomatic results of a possible Turkish involvement, the latter had focused on the most efficient way to capture these strategic islands in the middle of the Mediterranean without investing much. In other words, according to the military officials, the assistance of Turkey in the war especially in terms of the Dodecanese could make an important contribution to the Allied strategy since it would not only help opening of the Aegean Sea, but also alleviate the burden of the Allied troops.¹¹⁷⁹

However, from the diplomatic point of view, the British were well aware of the fact that any involvement of the Turkish troops in the Dodecanese would bring Turkish claims about the islands to the forefront. Therefore, it was no a coincidence that every time the British authorities discussed Turkey and the Dodecanese during the war, the diplomatic and military officials opened another sequence of debate concerning the future of the islands. This attitude of Foreign Office can be interpreted as another indicator of the British tendency to support the Greek claims on the islands.

In addition to Britain, the US also supported Greece. From a secret memorandum dealt with the colonial problems in May 1943, it is seen that Washington was also in favor of Athens.¹¹⁸⁰ According to the memorandum, the authorities needed to discuss

¹¹⁷⁸ The National Archives, PREM 3/3/6 dossier is full of correspondence summarizing well this attitude of Britain.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁰ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States. *Conferences at Washington and Quebec, 1943*, "Italy-Greece-Turkey, Colonial Problems: The Dodecanese

four options for the future settlement of the Dodecanese: Greek sovereignty, Turkish sovereignty, British sovereignty, and international administration. First and the foremost of them was Greek sovereignty. The subcommittees concerning the Dodecanese question expressed their opinion on the side of Greece based on the ethnic composition of the islands and on the will of the people.¹¹⁸¹ However, although the islands should have been entrusted to Greece, this transition should have been done without harming the Turkish-Greek relationship.¹¹⁸² Therefore, even if Greece had abandoned its expansionist motives for Turkey long before, thus decreasing the danger of a Turkish-Greek animosity in the Aegean Sea and even if these islands would not menace Anatolia when a weaker power like Greece controlled them, the Turkish security needs should have been satisfied with an arrangement of demilitarization.¹¹⁸³

The same report discusses the other options as well. For instance, according to the Americans, the potential claim of Turkey would be their previous sovereignty, which had exceeded four hundred years during the Ottoman period, together with their strategic concerns owing to the proximity of the islands to the Turkish mainland.¹¹⁸⁴ Therefore, it was emphasized that despite the official discourse of Ankara about not having any territorial claims, especially military circles were interested in annexing at least some of the islands with a probable exchange of populations.¹¹⁸⁵

This memorandum shows that the discussions about the Turkish sovereignty were made without a declaration of justification, unlike the ones about the Greek claims.

Islands,” 12 May 1943, p.794. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?id=FRUS.FRUS1943> (accessed May14, 2014).

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp.794-795.

¹¹⁸² Ibid.

¹¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

The other two options were the international administration for the Dodecanese, which would completely save the islands from being used for aggressive purposes, together with the cession of the region to Britain.¹¹⁸⁶ While the former could be further negotiated although it was problematic in terms of cultural ties and desires of the Greek people, it was not convenient to speak the second option since it would both leave the nationality problem unsettled and lead to Turkish resentment owing to the strategic considerations, only strengthening the British position in the Mediterranean.¹¹⁸⁷

Despite the existence of minor discrepancies, the deliberations of the American officials emphasize that the opinions of British and the US diplomatic circles indicated more or less similar points, especially with regard to the legitimacy of the Greek claims over the Dodecanese. These similar approaches, on the other hand, were constantly discussed throughout the time, owing to the fact that Britain never gave up the idea of capturing the islands. In this respect, it is seen that before the Dodecanesian campaign in 1943, even Churchill, as the architect of the operation, had asked to the Foreign Office whether Rhodes could be given to Turkey as a “prize,” in return for its active participation in the war or for a direct assistance from the Aegean coasts.¹¹⁸⁸ This discussion about tempting Turkey with Rhodes or any other Dodecanesian island started a series of discussion within the Foreign Office, which replied negatively to the Prime Minister. However, what was important in those talks was the Foreign Office’s acknowledgement of two facts. First, it emphasized that the British aim was to transfer

¹¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁸ The National Archives, PREM 3/3/6, Telegram from Prime Minister to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 4 April 1943.

the islands to Greece after the end of the war despite the uncertainty about the annexation of the whole group:

We have resisted the frequent requests of the Greek Government for assurances about the future status of the islands and we are under no commitments either to them or the Turks on this point. Nevertheless, it has long been our view that the Greek claims are just and that after the war they should get most, if not all, of the islands.¹¹⁸⁹

Second, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs also accepted that they were constantly discussing to bribe Turkey with the Dodecanese for its active or passive participation in the war, although it was certain that Turkey did not have a desire to gamble its future for the sake of the islands or any other territorial gain at that moment.¹¹⁹⁰ Indeed, although the Turkish military circles always discussed the capture of the islands with their Allied counterparts, the Turkish non-belligerency that the Allies highly criticized had been the main character of Turkish foreign policy long before.

The Dodecanese was an arena which was always on the table, especially on the military one. Since the islands could not be captured after the Dodecanese campaign of 1943 as a result of an absolute defeat of the Allied troops and since Britain continued to insist on clearing the Aegean of the Axis thereafter, the similar pattern of approaching the link between the islands and Turkey persisted until the end of the war, without a concrete result.

It should be emphasized at this point that Turkish stance in terms of not accepting any bribe to involve in the war does not necessarily mean that Turkey did not

¹¹⁸⁹ The National Archives, PREM 3/3/6, Telegram from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Prime Minister, 9 April 1943.

¹¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

have any territorial claims over the islands. That is to say, although Turkish politicians had declared that Turkey did not have any territorial ambitions during the war, it was obvious that it was determined to intervene into the discussions on the Dodecanese, yet in the post-war context, as was decided with the British in 1941. In this sense, arguably, similar to the paradoxical British approach, Turkey declared that it had no territorial intentions although had some postwar plans over the Dodecanese.

However, despite the similar dynamics concerning the Allied-Turkish contacts over the islands as was explained above, just before the unsuccessful Dodecanese campaign of the Allies, the German contact with Ankara about the Aegean had generated an excitement especially in the Foreign Office, exceeding beyond the above-mentioned reiterations. Von Papen, after the unconditional surrender of Italy, stressed that the German government had recommended the surrender of the Dodecanese to Turkey to Mussolini's government, since Germany had had little interest in this group of islands.¹¹⁹¹

The Allies interpreted the invitation of Berlin as a means to ensure that Turkey did not enter the war, "to spread discord between Turkey and the United Nations, to tear to pieces the treaty of alliance concluded in October 1939," as well as not to invest arms and troops to the Dodecanese when replacing the Italians.¹¹⁹² The answer of Turkey to the Germans relieved the British diplomatic circles since Ankara had informed Berlin that Turkey would hand the islands to the Allies in case of surrender owing to the fact that unconditional surrender of Italy had given the mortgage of all Italian possessions to

¹¹⁹¹ The National Archives, WO 106/3260, Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 2 October 1943.

¹¹⁹² *The New York Times*, 13 October 1943.

the Allies.¹¹⁹³ Furthermore, according to Turkey, Mussolini's government carried no weight at all, since the Badoglio government represented Italy in front of the Allied side.¹¹⁹⁴ It is seen that Turkey had no intent to place itself in middle of a complicated diplomatic situation before the end of the war.

The Germans seized the islands in October 1943 as a result of their victory in the Dodecanese Campaign of the Allied troops in the Aegean Archipelago. However, the diplomatic negotiations over the Dodecanese never fell from the agenda. The period after the Germans took the islands was the beginning of the end for the Nazis at the same time. Therefore, while the Nazi contacts with the Turks over the Aegean did not come to an end thereafter, the negotiations among the Allied parties steadily increased beginning with 1944, more from a diplomatic point of view than the military one, since the end of the war seemed close. In other words, the expiration date of the British position to defer the sovereignty issue to the end of the war was gradually coming with the beginning of 1944. For Turkish foreign policy, on the other hand, another problematic period had begun based on the Soviet Union.

The End of a Story: The Road to the Unification with Greece, 1944-1947

In 1944, Germany gradually experienced its downfall and Turkey decided to break diplomatic relations with the Reich. As was explained in the Chapter Six, the Allied parties had exerted a profound pressure on Turkey to enter the war after Tehran

¹¹⁹³ The National Archives, WO 106/3260, Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 2 October 1943.

¹¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Conference, but the refusal of Turkey to do so had brought the relationship of Ankara with the Allies onto deadlock. According to Karpaz, the period of Turkish isolation in the international arena dates back to 1944, because of the Turkish retardation of belligerency during the Second World War.¹¹⁹⁵ In this respect, the decision of Turkey to cut the ties with Berlin should be seen as a policy to repair its relationship with the Allied parties.

Karpaz also argues that the Soviet Union, which had desired Turkish entrance into war as soon as possible in 1943, thought negatively about the Turkish involvement in war that time, probably in order to keep Ankara from having a voice in the postwar world.¹¹⁹⁶ Indeed, a letter Stalin wrote to Churchill in July 1944 reflects this idea well. Stalin replied to Churchill's letter, which had informed the Russians of the Turkish decision to cut the ties with Berlin, that Turkey should not be compelled to a war anymore, and should not be taken into consideration in terms of its postwar demands.¹¹⁹⁷ This approach reverberates that Moscow had calculations about Ankara in the postwar settlement.

The Turkish decision to sever the ties with the Germans in August 1944, was evaluated as an important step for Turkey to repair its relationship with the Allies. It had also some reflections about its position in relation to the Dodecanese. How the Allies could have utilized from Turkey militarily in addition to the use of the airbases was opened into the discussion once again during 1944. But, the British Foreign Office

¹¹⁹⁵ Karpaz suggests that the in brief period between 1944 and 1946 Turkey was an isolated country. Kemal H. Karpaz, "Turkish-Soviet Relations," in *Turkey's Foreign Policy in Transition, 1950-1974* (ed.) Kemal Karpaz (Leiden: Brill, 1975), p.79.

¹¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.83.

¹¹⁹⁷ S.S.C.B. Dışışleri Bakanlıđı, *Stalin, Roosevelt ve Churchill'in Gizli Yazışmalarında Türkiye (1941-1944)* (İstanbul: Havass Yayınları, 1981), pp.116-117.

strictly rejected the involvement of the Turkish military in any operations regarding the islands, saying: “we definitely do not want the Turks to conquer the Aegean Islands or to liberate Greece.”¹¹⁹⁸ This clear stance of the British was not different from that of the US. Almost in the same period that Turkey cut its ties with Germany, the US Department of State prepared a top-secret memorandum, pointing out an agreement “that with the exception of Kastellorizo, which would be given to Turkey, sovereignty over the Dodecanese should be transferred to Greece.”¹¹⁹⁹

It was not surprising that after the Turkish entrance into the war in February 1945, the political importance of the decision with regard to the participation in the San Francisco Conference was mostly emphasized in British and American newspapers rather than the military one.¹²⁰⁰ Actually, the approach of the Turks in this respect differed from that of the Allies. During the days that the aforementioned newspapers emphasized the political character of the belligerency, the Turkish counterparts discussed the possible ways that the Turkish army could contribute to the Allied cause, especially in the shape of clearing the Germans from the Aegean Islands.¹²⁰¹

This option did not have support, for instance, in the articles of *The New York Times*, which said “any such attempt at conquest would probably opposed by the Greeks, and the Dodecanese in Turkish hands might not jibe with British ideas of the future of

¹¹⁹⁸ The National Archives, FO 195/2486, Telegram from Foreign Office to British Embassy in Ankara, 19 September 1944. It should be highlighted that another discussion in the military circles about the possible use of the Turkish soldiers in the liberation of the mainland Greece in case of Turkish belligerency in the short-term also took place. That is why the involvement of the Turkish troops in the liberation of both the islands and Greece was rejected in the statement of the Foreign Office.

¹¹⁹⁹ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States. *Conference at Quebec, 1944*, 3 August 1944, p.411. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?id=FRUS.FRUS1944> (accessed May 30, 2014).

¹²⁰⁰ *The New York Times*, 27 February 1945, *The Times* 24 February 1945.

¹²⁰¹ *Yeni Sabah*, 25 February 1945.

these islands.”¹²⁰² All of these discussions that began with 1944 and continued with the Turkish belligerency in February 1945 show that the unification of the islands with Greece had been nearly finalized in the minds of the British and Americans, yet without an official declaration.

However, the issue of the islands was not linked to only one party during 1944, owing to the fact that the area was still under the domination of Germany. This fact brings us to an important discussion of Turkish historiography: the contact between German and Turkish officials before the end of the war, and the German offer of the islands to Turkey through this communication. Indeed, this interaction, which was claimed to take place during the last months of the war, is so important for the Turkish literature that the German offer at issue is existent in many sources, especially in terms of the inability of Turkey to give a positive answer to this offer.¹²⁰³ One of the most important sources that constitute a basis for subsequent studies in this regard is the memoirs of Feridun Cemal Erkin, the Undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time. Erkin wrote of the unfortunate character of the Turkish decision in terms of rejecting the offer of the Nazis while specifically making evaluations about the Dodecanese:

It has been a misfortune to give up the decision of occupation after the offer of the Germans to us in terms of occupying the islands that they evacuated in 1944, without finding necessary to negotiate the issue since the British prevented us based on our question.¹²⁰⁴

¹²⁰² *The New York Times*, 27 February 1945.

¹²⁰³ For the examples of this approach, see Taşkıran, *Ürkek Bir Siyasetin Tarih Önündeki Ağır Vebali*, Celalettin Yavuz, *Menteşe Adaları (Onikiada) ’nın Tarihi*.

¹²⁰⁴ Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl: Anılar, Yorumlar*, vol.1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1980), p.231. “1944’te Almanların tahliye ettikleri Ege Adalarının tarafımızdan işgalini teklif etmeleri ve İngilizlerin bu yolda sorumuza cevaben önümüze geçmeleri üzerine

It should be emphasized that when I made research for this dissertation, I could not reach any official documents about this offer from the archives or the published material,¹²⁰⁵ except one assessment made by the British. According to this document, based on intelligence, the Germans in the Dodecanese Islands were cultivating the Turkish consul, in terms of an agreement to hand the islands over the Turks and escape through Turkey in return.¹²⁰⁶ Nearly at the same time, an article from the *Times* indicates a similar notification by stating that “unconfirmed reports speak of tentative approaches by the garrisons on some of the Greek islands who were reported to have suggested that the Turks should accept their surrender and should occupy the Dodecanese ‘for the duration.’”¹²⁰⁷ It should be noted that neither the Foreign Office documents, nor the *Times* handled the issue again. In other words, the offer in question specifically for the Dodecanese, on which nearly all the Turkish historiography was founded, was barely mentioned in these dossiers.¹²⁰⁸

However, what the British more problematized and discussed within the same files was the possible surrender of Chios and Lesbos to the Turks as the islands were situated in the northern part of the Aegean, close to the Dardanelles,¹²⁰⁹ rather than the

müzakere teşebbüsüne girmeye lüzum görmeden işgalden vaz geçme kararımız talihsizlik olmuştur.”

¹²⁰⁵ In this respect, I searched the National Archives, Archivio Storico del Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, Archives of the Turkish General Staff, Prime Ministry of States Archives, and *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*. If the archive of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is opened to the researchers, much more concrete documents may be found.

¹²⁰⁶ The National Archives, FO 195/2486, Telegram from Cyprus to Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, 14 August 1944.

¹²⁰⁷ *The Times*, 1 September 1944.

¹²⁰⁸ It should be emphasized that any such offer specifically targets the Dodecanese Islands does not exist in any other files belonging 1945 either.

¹²⁰⁹ The National Archives, WO 201/1762, Telegram from Foreign Office to British Embassy in Greece, 27 August 1944, FO 195/2486 Telegram From S.O.I. Izmir to Capt. S. One, 31 August 1944.

Dodecanese. This concern coincided with the time of surrender of the German troops on the Greek islands as a part of German evacuation of Greece.¹²¹⁰ As can be expected, the discussions took place among the British officials especially with respect to the Ankara's former promise that Turkey would pass the islands to the Allies in case of surrender,¹²¹¹ although it was obvious that some trust issues existed about whether Turkey would intern them or to hand them over to the Allies. It is seen from the correspondence that actual matter under discussion by the British officials in the second half of 1944 was the fate of Chios and Lesbos, rather than the Dodecanese group, since the former two were on the eve of the surrender while the Germans were determined to defend the Dodecanese, especially Rhodes until the last man, as Italian intelligence stated.¹²¹²

When all these facts were added to the term "Aegean Islands evacuated by the Germans in 1944" that Erkin used in his memoirs about the German desire to surrender to the Turks, rather than a more specific term "Dodecanese Islands," the picture about one of the most contentious issues of the Turkish historiography becomes further questionable. In other words, it seems that although the German forces in the islands did communicate Turkey during August or September 1944, the content of the contacts remains as a dilemma based on the existing documents.

In an effort to clarify the situation, I formulated some questions about the German contacts with Turkey in the interviews conducted for this dissertation. Sadi

¹²¹⁰ *The New York Times*, 5 September 1944.

¹²¹¹ The National Archives, FO 195/2486, Telegram from Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Ankara to Foreign Office, 21 August 1944.

¹²¹² ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, "*Notizie da Rodi*," (Information from Rhodes), 13 January 1945, Another intelligence shows that in order to do this, Germans were releasing the exit permits easily to decrease the civil population from this island in the acute food shortage. "*Notizie da Rodi*," (Information from Rhodes), 25 January 1945.

Nasuhoğlu born in 1931 on Rhodes experienced the war years. As an active person from the Turkish Dodecanesian community, he worked for the Community of Rhodes Muslims and Pious Foundations Administration (*Rodos İslam Cemaati ve Evkaf İdaresi*) between 1948 and 1954, wrote a book on Rhodes history,¹²¹³ and engaged in activities promoting the Turkish culture on the islands. In one of our contact in 2013, he described the German invitation as follows:

When the Germans sent a Turk, a Greek, an Italian priest and two German soldiers to Marmaris in order to give the message ‘come and take the islands,’ an official answer came from Ankara: The Turkish government neither wants nor gives a hand span of territory!¹²¹⁴

In a second correspondence, in which I asked for details on this interaction between the German and Turkish authorities, he drew a much more elaborate picture. According to him, the year of this German contact with the Turks was 1945, one month before the German commander of the Dodecanese Otto Wagener surrendered his troops. It seems that the events that Erkin and Nasuhoğlu narrated are different from each other. It should also be emphasized that Nasuhoğlu did not remember any other German contact or offer made to Turkey for the Dodecanese:

In 8 April 1945, as the representatives of the Turks, Sheik Tahsin Milyazade, the Vice Chair of Community of Rhodes Muslims Ali Haydar Hacıdurmuş(...) and Süruri Kovacı from the notables; as the representatives of the Greeks, Priest Apostolos (Papaioannou); as the

¹²¹³ M. Sadi Nasuhoğlu, *Rodos (Anılar ve Tarihçe)* (Muğla: Muğla Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008).

¹²¹⁴ Sadi Nasuhoğlu, interview by the author, e-mail, 24 August 2013. “*Almanlar Rodos’tan bir Türk, bir Yunan ve İtalyan papaz ve iki Alman subayları ile Marmaris’e, "gelin adaları alın" diye mesaj gönderdiklerinde Ankara’dan şöyle resmi yanıt geldi: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ne bir karış toprak ister, ne de bir karış toprak verir!*”

representatives of Italians the Mayor and engineer Giuseppe Macchi and Catholic Priest Prof. Angiolini and two German officers were sent to Marmaris with a sail boat (...) I worked as a secretary in the Community of Rhodes Muslims and Pious Foundations Administration between 1948 and 1954. I asked about this issue to Tahsin Hodja, who was coming to the Administration every month in order to take his salary. He had given me only this answer: 'Yes, they (the group) talked to the British in Marmaris but I could not understand anything...'(...)

But Süruri Kovacı, until his death in 1962, told this event hundred times as follows: 'the British and the Turks welcomed us in Marmaris. The German officials were holding a letter in their hands: "We Germans cannot feed the islands. The war came almost to the end. We want food from the International Red Cross and the Turkish Red Crescent urgently. If Turkey wants to come to the islands with this opportunity, we will not resist. If they want, they could bring force. But we cannot intervene about to whom the islands would be transferred after the war." Turkish authorities took this committee to Muğla and the telegram came from Ankara after three days said: 'The Turkish government neither wants nor will give a hand span of territory.' After this committee returned to Rhodes, wooden Turkish boats, with the signs of red crosses on their both sides, carried food to the island many times. (Also I have seen this).

Years later, when I asked Dimitris Papaioannou, who was the little brother of Priest Apostolos and my close friend, he gave me this answer: 'No, this committee went to Marmaris in order to request aid from the International Red Cross organization there.' (...) The brother of Apostolos, lawyer Manolis Papaioannou, who wrote a book on the German occupation of Rhodes, also writes about this event in his work for food assistance (...) The Greek authors wrote and evaluated in this way and unfortunately I do not have any written proof.¹²¹⁵

¹²¹⁵Sadi Nasuhoğlu, interview by the author, e-mail, 5 March 2015. "8 Nisan 1945 günü Rodos Türklerini temsilen hoca Şeyh Tahsin Milyazade, Rodos İslam Cemaati ikinci başkanı Ali Haydar Hacıdurmuş (...) ve eşraftan Süruri Kovacı, Yunanlıları temsilen papaz Apostolos Papaioannu, İtalyanları temsilen Belediye Başkanı Mühendis Giuseppe Macchi ve Katolik Papaz Prof. Angiolini, ve iki Alman subayı bir yelkenli ve motorlu tekne ile Marmaris'e gönderilir. Ben 1948-54 yılları arasında Rodos İslam Cemaati ve Evkaf İdaresi sekreterliği yaptım. Evkaf Dairesi'ne her ay maaş almaya gelen Tahsin Hoca'ya birkaç defa bu olayı sordum. Bana ancak şu yanıtları verebilmişti: "Evet, onlar Marmaris'teki İngiliz adamlarıyla konuştular ama ben bir şey anlamadım..." (...) Ama Süruri Kovacı, 1962 yılında ölünceye kadar yüzlerce defa bu olayı şöyle anlatırdı: Marmaris'te bizi Türk makamları ve İngilizler karşıladılar. Heyetimizdeki Alman subaylarının elinde şöyle bir mektup vardı: "Biz Almanlar artık adaları besleyemez hale geldik. Neredeyse savaşın sonu gelmek üzeredir. International Red Cross (Enternasyonal Kızıl Haç) ve Türk Kızılayı'ndan acil yiyecek maddeleri istiyoruz. Eğer Türkiye bu vesile ile adalara gelmek isterse biz karşı koymayacağız. Hatta isterlerse beraberinde zabıta kuvvetleri de getirebilirler. Ama savaştan sonra adaların kime

Undoubtedly, the narrative of Nasuhoğlu based on his reminiscences cannot be evidence standing alone. In the previous chapter, it was suggested that the first Red Cross aid to Rhodes via Turkey took place after January 1945, when the Germans told the Allies that they would accept humanitarian assistance. In this sense, whatever the reason that the committee came to Muğla in April in order to discuss the aid matters was, it seems that it was not a secret committee without the knowledge of the British, Greeks, and Italians. In addition, this account is also important in terms of differentiating the events to which the Dodecanesian Muslims and Erkin referred as a “German” offer. In this respect, it also strengthens the view of this dissertation that the German contact that Erkin wrote was about the islands that the Germans were evacuating; Lesvos and Chios, as the concerns of the British showed.

In conclusion, this dissertation argues that with the existing data, the prevalent discourse about the Dodecanese as a missed opportunity is not a reliable one. Actually, reliability of the discourse is not just related to the ambiguity about the offer and the lack of written documents. It should be noted that Turkey had already cut the diplomatic ties with Germany at the time of the claimed offers. Besides, it was not likely that

verileceğine biz karışmayız.” Türk makamları bu heyeti Muğla'ya götürdüler ve üç gün sonra Ankara'dan gelen telgrafta şunları yazıyordu: ‘Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ne bir karış toprak verir, ne bir karış toprak ister!’ Bu heyet Rodos'a döndükten sonra bir müddet ahşap Türk teknelerinin iki yanlarına kırmızı hac ve RED CROSS yazısı ile Rodos'a pek çok defa yiyecek taşıdılar (bunu ben de gördüm). Ben yıllar sonra papaz Apostolos'un kardeşi ve benim samimi dostum avukat Dimitris Papaionannou'ya sorduğumda onun yanıtı şöyle oldu: ‘Hayır o heyet, Marmaris'te bulunan uluslararası Kızılhaç teşkilatından gıda yardımı istemek için gitti (...) Rodos'un Alman işgali hakkında bir kitap yazan ve Apostolos'un ağabeyi olan avukat Manolis Papaioannou da bu olayı kitabında, sadece gıda yardımı için olduğunu yazmaktadır(...) Yunanlı yazarlar bu olayı bu şekilde kaydettiler ve yorumladılar. Benim de elimde maalesef hiç bir yazılı kanıt yok.”

Turkey could occupy any islands, regardless of the north and south, when trying to fix its relations with the Allies. Therefore, from a diplomatic point of view, the German offer at issue meant a move to stir up trouble in this relationship. On the other hand, it should also be noted that Germany was a defeated country in 1945. The probable occupation of the islands would not bring a “fait accompli,” yet further trouble for the Turkish diplomacy.

As was explained above, the end of diplomatic relations with Germany as well as the controversial German initiatives towards the Turks did not yield any positive result in terms of the Turkish claims on the Dodecanese. Actually, the state of affairs necessitated the opposite direction for Turkish diplomacy because, when the war was coming to an end, Turkey was well aware of the problems involved in its security. Indeed, while the above-mentioned developments took place in terms of the Aegean, Churchill and Stalin, who met in Moscow in October 1944, were discussing the future of the Straits. In this respect, Churchill supported a change in the Straits regime¹²¹⁶ in favor the Soviets. It was in those conditions that Turkey, which was stranded with the Soviet desires with no support, tried to come closer to Britain as well as Greece in the Balkans and informed the Greek government that Turkey did not have any claims towards the Dodecanese in November 1944.¹²¹⁷ This action of Turkey was interpreted as a “realist attitude” since the Turkish interests in the Mediterranean necessitated a close cooperation with Greece.¹²¹⁸

The Soviet aims on the Straits were reiterated also in Yalta Conference between 4 and 11 February 1945. The discussions among Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt

¹²¹⁶ Gürün, p.270.

¹²¹⁷ Armaoğlu, p.174.

¹²¹⁸ *The Times*, 22 November 1944.

indicate that the Big Three were in favor of a change in the Montreux regime, which had been prepared in a different diplomatic context and bound the fate of the Soviet Russia to Turkey.¹²¹⁹ Thereafter, in March 1945, the Soviet Union declared the abolition of the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality of 1925 between Turkey and Russia. In June 1945, it juxtaposed its demands from Turkey, with regard to the bases in the Straits, territorial changes especially in terms of Kars and Ardahan and the alteration in the Montreux regime. Actually, these were the times that Turkey feared the Soviet control indeed, as the statement of Nurullah Esat Sümer, the Deputy Minister of the Foreign Affairs at that time, shows. He stated that Turkey could not be regarded as Poland or Romania,¹²²⁰ which fell under the Soviet domination after the Second World War.

The Soviet Union reiterated its demands in Potsdam Conference, which took place between 17 July and 2 August 1945. During the meetings, the Soviets tried to the pull the issues into a bilateral context between Ankara and Moscow, but Britain and the US challenged the Russians emphasizing the international character of the Straits.¹²²¹ Yet, it should be noted that both Britain and the US supported a change in Montreux regime with a much freer regulation. What they had rather problematized was the Soviet effort to place the issue into a bilateral framework between Moscow and Ankara and to gain bases in the Straits, since it would mean Russian control in Turkey as well as in the Near East. On other issues, however, specifically in terms of the territorial claims on the Eastern Anatolian cities of Kars and Ardahan, the Soviets were given almost a free-

¹²¹⁹ Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Türk Sovyet İlişkileri ve Boğazlar Meselesi* (Ankara: Başnur Matbaası, 1968), pp.265-267.

¹²²⁰ Metin Toker, *Türkiye Üzerinde 1945 Kâbusu: 2 Dünya Savaşından Sonra Türk-Sovyet ve Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri Üzerine bir İnceleme* (Ankara: Akis Yayınları, 1971), p.43.

¹²²¹ For the negotiations about the Straits in Potsdam Conference, see A. L. MacFie, "The Straits Question at the Potsdam Conference: The British Position," *Middle Eastern Studies* 23, no. 1 (1987), pp.75-82.

hand. The statement of the US President Truman in his memoirs, “I said that the question of territorial concessions was a Turkish and Russian dispute which they should have to settle themselves,”¹²²² in Potsdam is a good indication that the help Turkey was seeking was not always on the table.

Although the Soviet and American relations showed signs of unrest in the second half of 1945, Truman’s declaration; “I am tired of babying the Soviets,” came in January 1946, approximately six months after Potsdam Conference. It is within these conditions that the Americans would send *Missouri* to Turkey for the funeral of Ambassador Ertegün in April 1946, as a symbolic act of friendship, Turkey would progressively break its isolation thereafter and would reject the Soviet notes insisting on the above-mentioned demands, this time with the full support of the US, which would also declare assistance for Greece and Turkey against the Soviets through the famous Truman Doctrine in 1947. In this narrative, what should be further emphasized is that while Turkey could gain the Western support after 1946, the fate of the Dodecanese as the subject of this chapter was almost finalized in the meantime. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the story of the transfer of the Dodecanese to Greece keeping this background of Turkish foreign policy of the time in mind.

In this respect, returning to the first months of 1945, another step that Turkey took had become the declaration of war on Germany in February 1945, just after abovementioned Yalta Conference. Athanassopoulou states that with this move “Ankara hoped to advance its claims over the Dodecanese Islands.”¹²²³ Indeed, the discussions on

¹²²² Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs. 1945, Year of Decisions*, vol.1 (New York: Signet, 1955), pp.415-416.

¹²²³ Ekavi Athanassopoulou, *Turkey- Anglo-American Security Interests 1945-1952, The First Enlargement of NATO* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p.37.

the Dodecanese intensified steadily thereafter, especially in April 1945. Actually, the three-four month period after April 1945 was the most critical epoch for the problem, which never fell from the agenda of the interested parties that searched for the best possible solution for themselves. In this context, the major concern of Britain seems to ensure the transfer of the Dodecanese to Greece without leading to an impasse in the Turkish-Greek relations.¹²²⁴ If Ankara's statement made to Athens in November 1944, in terms of not having any territorial claims is kept in mind, this concern of Britain indicates that Turkey, behind its official stand, was still interfering in the issue. According to the Ambassador in Ankara, offering Kastellorizo to the Turks was one of the ways to reach an agreement easily, not being different from the ideas asserted during the Second World War,¹²²⁵ due to the proximity of this island to the Turkish mainland.

Apart from the solution through Kastellorizo, the officials in London had also aimed to achieve a complete unity among the Allies, in terms of support for the Greeks.¹²²⁶ In this way, Britain would not have the sole responsibility, as well as the supporter of the Greek aims in the Dodecanese. Another method, on the other hand, was giving a chance to the Italian government to declare that it would transfer its sovereign rights over the Dodecanese to Greece and over Kastellorizo to Turkey, thus solving the problem at an early date.¹²²⁷

The Greeks and the Dodecanesian Greek community also shared this point of view. The Greek associations in different parts of the world were in contact with the

¹²²⁴ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Athens to Foreign Office, 5 April 1945.

¹²²⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Sir Maurice Peterson, Ankara to Foreign Office, 5 April 1945.

¹²²⁶ Ibid.

¹²²⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Washington to Foreign Office, 20 April 1945.

Italians, as they were with the Americans and the British.¹²²⁸ For instance, the head of a Dodecanesian group in Washington had written a letter to the Italian Ambassador there to ask for an official declaration stating that the Italian government would be happy to see the unification of the islands with Greece during April 1945.¹²²⁹ Although the ambassador replied that he would not make any particular declaration in the name of his government in this particular moment, all the parties had begun to pay attention to an Italian statement. The US was not an exception in this sense. According to the American officials, the Italian statement on this subject would be remarkably useful for the purpose that London had in mind, and such a declaration was not a remote possibility based on the public and private accounts.¹²³⁰

The reason behind the fact that US paid attention to the Greek-Italian reconciliation was its position against the pushy British behavior, which sought to persuade the Americans and the Russians to make an early settlement. Although the US did not differ from Britain in terms of its support for the Greek claims, it had adopted a more patient approach for the Dodecanese, which should and would have been resolved with the general peace settlement unless the Greeks and the Italians solved the problem themselves. Therefore, the Americans emphasized that in the existing conditions, the military government during the interim period needed to act impartially until the afore-

¹²²⁸ It should be stated that these Dodecanesian associations situated in the US, Greece, and Egypt had been active throughout the interwar and war period with an aim to obtain unification with the “motherland.” The density of the efforts of these groups were on the rise throughout 1945.

¹²²⁹ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, “*Lettera da Mavris a Tarchiani*,” (Letter from Mavris to Tarchiani), 28 April 1945.

¹²³⁰ United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States. *Diplomatic Papers: The Near East and Africa, 1945*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the British Embassy,” 27 April 1945, p.308. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1945v08> (accessed June 1, 2014).

mentioned peace treaty and that the US government would definitely not make any early declaration about the status of the Dodecanese, as the British desired.¹²³¹

When these discussions were being carried out, the German surrender was signed on 7 May, as the harbinger of the end of the Second World War in Europe. Therefore, the British, in the name of the Allies, took possession of the Dodecanese Islands, which were to be administered by the military government until the final settlement was reached. During the same week as the Germans surrendered the islands, the Greek government contacted Churchill and officially asked for the annexation of the Dodecanese Islands.¹²³² On the same day, the Greek regent, Archbishop Damaskinos, departed from Athens with Averoff cruiser to visit the Dodecanese with the aim of “giving Greece’s kind regards” to the islands.¹²³³ According to the Archbishop, his visit to Rhodes was the official acknowledgement of the ties uniting the Dodecanese Islands with mainland Greece.¹²³⁴ Therefore, he emphasized in his speech that the Dodecanesians would never be deprived of liberty that they just gained and this assurance was under the guarantee of the Allies.¹²³⁵ In other words, he promised that the Dodecanese would soon be the part of Greece.

What was the position of Turkey in the face of the Greek actions? According to Hayta, silence prevailed in Turkey in front of these developments.¹²³⁶ Likewise, the *New York Times*, while dealing with the visit of the Archbishop, suggested that although the Turkish newspapers mentioned the events, they refrained from making comment about

¹²³¹ Ibid.

¹²³² *Yeni Sabah*, 14 May 1945.

¹²³³ Ibid.

¹²³⁴ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, “*New York Times*,” 16 May 1945.

¹²³⁵ Ibid.

¹²³⁶ The silence that Hayta tells about the Turks was also valid for the Greeks existing in the administration. For more information, see Hayta.

it.¹²³⁷ This study argues that though the press did not make thorough analyzes either for the official demand of the Greek government or for the visit and speech of the Archbishop, it was not totally correct to say that Turkey had already given up on the matter. The British documents show that the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs frequently contacted with Britain during the days of the above-mentioned actions. In one of these messages, Turkish official had emphasized that Ankara was following the developments with concern:

Mr. Türkgeldi said that as Turkish government had heard nothing from us on this subject, they were temporarily keeping these messages from the press but in view of Turkey's real interest, this could not be done for long and they hoped for immediate enlightenment from British ally. He felt it unnecessary to stress the great importance to Turkey of the Dodecanese and of the Turkish government being consulted about their disposal...¹²³⁸

The detail of this disposal would come up two days later. The Turks stressed that the Turkish interests were specifically lying on five islands in the Dodecanese group, namely, Leros, Kalimnos, Kos, Nisiros, and Symi, which were more or less within Turkish territorial waters and which influenced the Turkish security strongly.¹²³⁹ The Turks did not incorporate Kastellorizo into this group, because they thought that it should have been Turkish anyway without much discussion.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁷ *The New York Times*, 19 May 1945.

¹²³⁸ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 13 May 1945.

¹²³⁹ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office, 15 May 1945.

¹²⁴⁰ According to Turkey, Kastellorizo would have been Turkish anyway if it had not been given only to obtain peace in the difficult conditions of 1923. Ibid.

The Turkish demand for the five islands as well as Kastellorizo created trouble because it disturbed the British and Greek plans for the Dodecanese. In the contacts between these two powers, the Greeks alleged that they had received guarantees from Turkey, which would not assert any claims over the Dodecanese while the British stressed that Turks were not accepting the existence of such assurances.¹²⁴¹ As can be seen, the disagreement began to reign the Aegean Archipelago on a sudden, with the diplomatic statements of Turkey.

In reality, Turkey was paying attention to its relationship with Greece and uttering its good will towards its neighbour every step of the way. However, Ankara also emphasized that discussing a matter directly related to its security was also an important duty. Actually, Turkey still had hopes about a possible partition of the islands if it could have the opportunity to discuss the matter bilaterally with Greece and if it could obtain the support of Britain in terms of such a solution.¹²⁴² In one of the discussions between the officials of Ankara and London, the Turks sought such support although the British officials had declared frankly that these areas belonged to the Greeks, leading to disappointment for the Turkish officials.¹²⁴³

Ankara reiterated its desire to discuss the matter bilaterally with the Greeks several times, but Britain was of the opinion that the Turks should not have been permitted to make its own discussions.¹²⁴⁴ The documents regarding the Turkish involvement in the issue display well that how Britain was supporting the Greek claims, to such an extent that in one of the correspondence, Foreign Office officials stated that

¹²⁴¹ Ibid.

¹²⁴² Ibid.

¹²⁴³ Ibid.

¹²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Turks should not “open their mouths too wide” in the meantime.¹²⁴⁵ On the other hand, this statement, which displays the irritated attitude of the British, also shows that the Turks did not behave as passive as the existing literature on the issue implies, at least behind the closed doors.¹²⁴⁶

It is important to note that the statement that the British made to the Turks just after the Greek official request of annexation and the visit of the Archbishop Damaskinos about the fact that the Allies did not have any “intention of reaching an immediate decision about the future status of the islands or of handing them over to the Greeks,”¹²⁴⁷ was a direct result of the inquiries of Ankara. The coincidence of the discussion among the British officials whether the Greek contingences should have been in the Dodecanese or sent back to mainland Greece in order not prejudice the future of the islands with the above-mentioned statement of the British is also worth considering from this perspective.¹²⁴⁸ Actually, the British had already explained to the Turks, who were sensitive about the Greek troops stationed on the islands that since the duty of controlling the German garrison in the Dodecanese had been given to the Greeks, it was normal to see the Greek soldiers on the islands.¹²⁴⁹

However, it should be emphasized that despite the existence of Turkish attempts over the Dodecanese as was explained above, it cannot be said that gaining these islands

¹²⁴⁵ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Foreign Office to Angora, 17 May 1945.

¹²⁴⁶ This attitude of Turkey, claiming some of the islands not official notes but with explanatory talks also shows that how the Turkish stance based on territorial changes could be blurred from time to time.

¹²⁴⁷ The National Archives, FO 371/48342, Telegram from Foreign Office to Angora, 17 May 1945.

¹²⁴⁸ The National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from Foreign Office to Athens, 15 May 1945.

¹²⁴⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 15 May 1945.

became the utmost priority of Turkish foreign policy. The period of the Dodecanese talks in April and May more or less coincided with the aforementioned Soviet demands as well as the abolition of the Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that the headlines of the newspapers after June 1945 were reserved for the Soviet Russia, the future of the Turkish Straits, and the possible reactions of London and Washington to the issue.¹²⁵⁰

What was the position of the Dodecanese within all these discussions? Did the future of the islands become an absolutely irrelevant topic that fell completely from the agenda? How did Turkey follow the developments regarding the islands in the Aegean after May 1945? Addressing all these questions, this dissertation suggests that Turkey continued to follow the discussions regarding the Dodecanese with concern because putting the Turkish claims over the islands aside; the area was tightly related to the Straits, which were the major anxiety of Ankara at that time. The following pages will designate how the Dodecanese would be further linked to the Straits concerns of Turkey. However, at this point, it is important to note that while Turkey implemented its foreign policy agenda in order to find a way out from a difficult diplomatic position, the press which was relatively silent about the Dodecanese was getting excited from time to time with the articles about the islands.

In this sense, the summer of 1945 was significant because all the regional aspects were complicated. For instance, while Turkey was struggling with the demands of Russia, Greece was involved in another battle with its domestic strife which would turn into a civil war in 1946. Greece was also worried about its territorial integrity since

¹²⁵⁰ According to those newspapers, London and Washington began to be worried about the Soviet position in the Balkans. *Yeni Sabah*, 28 June 1945; and *Cumhuriyet*, 28 June 1945.

Soviet Russia was demanding a territorial betterment for the Slavs in the Balkans, which would certainly affect the Greek borders,¹²⁵¹ in which the Greek communists were gradually getting powerful.

On the other hand, all the newspapers, including the Turkish ones, expected/hoped a Greek-Turkish block in the Balkans under the tutelage of the British, as opposed to the Slavic countries dominated by the Soviets.¹²⁵² According to the evaluations, the Turkish-Greek cooperation in the Balkans especially with the support of the British was imperative at that time;¹²⁵³ if the Western powers did not want to give rein the whole region including the Near East to the communists. In this context, the Dodecanese remained as an obstacle between these two parties, which needed to be closer to each other. But, nearly at the same time that the press was talking about the necessity of a block between Ankara and Athens, the articles and comments that were written in the Turkish newspapers started a battle of words between Greece and Turkey.

Since it was the only major period, through which the Turkish journals seriously commented on the future of the Dodecanese, it is important to mention some of them. The most important article belonged to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüştü Aras. Aras, in an article published in *Tan* suggested that an autonomous administration with demilitarization and within a strong cooperation between Greece, Britain, and Turkey was the most suitable solution for the Dodecanese because throughout the interwar period, Turkey had lived with anxiety about the fortifications that Italy implemented in Rhodes and Leros, on the one hand, and the economy of the islands necessitated the cooperation of Turkey and the Greece, on the other hand:

¹²⁵¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 7 July 1945.

¹²⁵² *Yeni Sabah*, 22 July 1945.

¹²⁵³ Xydis, p.122.

I have spoken about this question on one previous occasion under a different and more academic title, when I raised the suggestion that the people of these islands should be given an autonomy based on full independence. Turkey and Greece would grant great commercial facilities to these islands and to guarantee complete security to the neighboring countries all fortifications would have to be removed. I said that Britain, Turkey and Greece would give their guarantee to withstand any attack that might be made against these islands. I still hold the opinion that such a plan could be applied even today and could be harmonized with the terms of the Security Council of the International Organization... Giving autonomy to the Dodecanese does not signify separating these islands from Greece but uniting with Greece an independent Dodecanese... A solution of this nature would draw Greece nearer to Turkey, Britain and Greece to establish cooperation in the Aegean. This would open for the Dodecanese the gates of prosperity and peace. The question of the Dodecanese could be studied at the Peace conference, but in my view it would be preferable to have an Anglo-Turkish-Greek commission study this question prior to its being submitted to the Conference.¹²⁵⁴

At the beginning of this article, the former Minister emphasized that he was making this analysis with the thought of preventing Turkish-Greek relations from deterioration over the Dodecanese.¹²⁵⁵ It was also obvious from the suggestion that it had an intention to make Turkey with other diplomatic problems closer both to Britain and Greece in the region. But, contrary to his actual intent, the article of Aras got immense amount of reaction from the Greeks.

The Central Committee of the Dodecanese sent a note both to İnönü and to Saraçoğlu protesting the Aras' article by stating that the piece of the former Minister had been shocking to the Greek people, who showed their determination to be united with

¹²⁵⁴ Tevfik Rüştü Aras, *Tan*, 25 July 1945, quoted by the National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from Sir M. Peterson to Foreign Office, 4 August 1945.

¹²⁵⁵ Ibid.

motherland Greece.¹²⁵⁶ Likewise, the head of the Turkish-Greek community also manifested its disapproval of the article because Aras' ideas could not reflect the sincere opinion of the Turkish citizens towards the Greeks.¹²⁵⁷ In addition to the committees, the Greek press also harshly reacted to the article. For instance, the Greek newspaper *Katimerini* stressed that if the official circles shared the former Minister's point of view, Turkish-Greek relations would irremediably jeopardized, making clarification of the issue essential.¹²⁵⁸

The reaction to the article forced Aras to write another piece in which he stated that he had discussed autonomy as a mere idea and nobody should suspect his warm feelings towards the Greeks and the Dodecanesians.¹²⁵⁹ He also said that his opinions were completely personal,¹²⁶⁰ thus, stressing his disconnection from the Turkish government. Yet, despite his explanations, the issue did not go away, because the article of Aras had opened the Pandora's Box. Various authors wrote other articles in Turkish newspapers thereafter. When the contents of these articles are considered, it can be suggested that the opinions of their authors were much more severe than that of Aras. For instance, the day after the commentary of the former Minister, a former parliamentarian and journalist, Ethem İzzet Benice, wrote an article on *Son Telgraf*, suggesting that the islands should be given to Turkey:

¹²⁵⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 4 August 1945.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁸ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, "*Questione del Dodecanneso e Reazioni Greche*," (The Dodecanese Question and the Greek Reaction), 5 August 1945.

¹²⁵⁹ The National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from Sir. M. Peterson, Ankara to Foreign Office, 10 August 1945.

¹²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

As a matter of fact, islands such as Meis that are within our territorial waters should be given to Turkey, which would mean ensuring their security to the maximum. But Dr. Rüştü Tefvîk Aras' view is different. He says that the Dodecanese Islands should be annexed to no country and that they should be given autonomy (...) From the point of view of the security of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Dodecanese Islands that have been liberated from the Fascist yoke; this proposal could be dwelt upon as a final and practical measure. We should like to re-emphasize that if the people who are to organise peace think of giving these islands to Turkey-islands that lie almost at the tip of her nose- they would not be doing anything wrong or out of place. Such an offer on the part of the great nations would no doubt be welcomed by our Greek friend and allies.¹²⁶¹

The editorials of *Yeni Sabah* supported the views in *Son Telgraf*. These excerpts seemed anonymous although they supposedly belonged to Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, a Turkish journalist and politician. The tone in his articles was tough as opposed to those of Aras and Yenice. On 13 August 1945, the editorial of *Yeni Sabah* with the title "Excessive Excitement of Greek friends," warned Athens that the Turks could run out of patience unless the grumbles coming from Athens came to an end:

Our friends started massive racket and carryings around the matter of the Dodecanese Islands. In fact, they are going too far by arguing that even the opinions about an autonomous administration for the islands, putting aside the restoration of the islands to our Turkey, as the legal possessor, are major offence to their rights. Although we sustain our silence based on a great dignity in order not to blur the ambient, the weird outcries coming from Athens can exhaust our patience.¹²⁶²

¹²⁶¹ Ethem İzzet Benice, *Son Telgraf*, 26 July 1945, quoted by National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from Sir. M. Peterson, Ankara to Foreign Office, 4 August 1945.

¹²⁶² *Yeni Sabah*, 13 August 1945. "Dostlarımız 12 Ada mes'eleşi etrafında büyük şamata ve yaygaraya başlamış bulunuyorlar. Hatta bu adaların meşru sahipleri olan Türkiyemize iadesini değil, fakat muhtar bir şekle sahip olması hakkındaki düşünceleri bile kendi haklarına büyük tecavüz sayacak kadar ileri gidiyorlar. Ortılığı bulandırmamak için sükûtu, büyük bir vakarla muhafaza ederken Atina'dan garip feryatların yükselmesi nihayet bizim de sabrımızı tüketebilir."

After this excerpt, *Yeni Sabah* continued to publish pieces about the islands for several days. It is seen that the every commentary in the Turkish newspapers led to repercussions in the Greek politics and public opinion. After 18 August, when the Anatolian Agency declared that a Greek commission would go to London in order to resolve the Dodecanesian problem,¹²⁶³ another editorial was published in the same newspaper, supporting the annexation of the islands to Turkey:

Greece is talking too loudly on the matter of the Dodecanese. Italy had seized these islands not from Greece, but from Turkey. Therefore, as a logical consequence, a stolen property should be returned to its owner, not to a third party (...) It is not certain that when the future of the islands is decided, we will accept the transition of these islands to a foreign power, even if this is Greece, as our close friend, because the Italian sovereignty on these islands had become a source of grief for Anatolia as well as a sharp dagger directed against the heart of Turks. These islands are too close to our coasts and almost an extension of our Anatolia. Our Greek friends are faced with so complex problems that should be solved with the Bulgarians and Yugoslavians that they should not be deprived of the Turkish support by insisting on the Dodecanesian story.”¹²⁶⁴

July and August 1945 were the period in which the Turkish press actively commented on the Dodecanese and challenged the Greek claims. Putting the Aras’ most

¹²⁶³ *Yeni Sabah*, 19 August 1945.

¹²⁶⁴ *Yeni Sabah*, 20 August 1945. “Yunanistan Oniki ada meselesinde çok yüksek perdeden konuşmaktadır. Bu adaları İtalya, Yunanistan’dan değil, Türkiye’den gasbetmişti. Binaenaleyh mantıki bir netice olarak çalınmış mal sahibine iade olunmak lazım gelir, yoksa üçüncü bir şahsa değil(...) İtalya’nın elinde bulunması Anadolu için bir ıstırap kaynağı olan ve Türk kalpgahına çevrilmiş sivri bir hançer tesiri bırakan oniki adanın kat’i statusü tayin edilirken buraların herhangi bir yabancı hakimiyetin altına, hatta o yabancı en ziyade bize dost olan Yunanistan bile olsa, girmesine mutlak olarak razı olacağımız hiç de muhakkak değildir. Bu adalar sahillerimize çok yakın ve adeta Anadolumuzun bir uzaması ve çıkıntısı mahiyetindedir. Yunan dostlarımız Bulgristan ve Yugoslavlarla çözülmesi lazım gelen o kadar karışık ve muğlak davalarla karşı karşıyadırlar ki oniki ada teranesi üzerinden ısrar ederek Türkün sağlam dayanağından mahrum kalmamalıdır.”

controversial comment aside, it seems that the Turkish government did not silence the press on purpose. That is to say, although Turkey did not make any official demand about the islands, it permitted the campaign carried out through the press, which was not as “silent” as in May. While trying to show its position through the newspapers, Turkey also made efforts to send the Dodecanesian Muslim refugees back to their homelands as soon as possible to increase the proportion of the Muslims in the total population.¹²⁶⁵ It can be suggested that Turkey was trying to demand the islands without officially demanding them with its obscure behaviour. One of the colloquia that the Turkish Ambassador in London, Cevat Açıkalın, made with the British officials displays this vague attitude of Turkey:

Mr. Açıkalın, particularly on the occasion, had stressed that Turkey had always disavowed territorial ambitions and said that on at least one occasion in the last two years she could with easily have put herself in occupation of some or all of the Dodecanese. So far as Turkey was concerned, the question of the Dodecanese had not arisen. Mr Açıkalın said it was his understanding that the disposal of the Dodecanese was not at present in question and until it was Turkey had no interest. If at a later stage the Dodecanese were being parcelled out, Turkey might conceivable have claims at least as strong as some others. In the context in which he spoke I definitely understood M. Açıkalın’s last remark to refer to a distribution of the Dodecanese among several countries and that it did not exclude the possibility of Turkey recognizing Greek claims alone to the Dodecanese (...)¹²⁶⁶

As can be seen from the interpretation of the colloquium, the Turkish Ambassador could stress in the same conversation that Turkey was not a country with territorial interest

¹²⁶⁵ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, “*Notizie dal Dodecanneso*,” (Information from the Dodecanese), 22 August 1945.

¹²⁶⁶ The National Archives, FO 195/2487, Telegram from British Embassy in Angora to Foreign Office, 21 July 1945.

while it could claim some of the islands in the future. Likewise, probably the British understood that Turkey not only was interested in the distribution of the islands, but also could accept the Greek annexation of the Dodecanese from the talk.

The vagueness of the positions was not unique to Turkey either. Indeed, the summer of 1945 symbolized an epoch in which the future of the Dodecanese was so complex that even the British, who were the ardent supporters of the Dodecanesian unification with Greece on paper, were suspected that they had an intention to take Rhodes, Kos, and Leros in order both to consolidate its position in the Mediterranean and to secure the area that was under the threat of the Soviet Union due to the problem of the Straits.¹²⁶⁷ According to the assertions, Britain would leave only the remaining islands to Greece while Turkey would be given Kastellorizo.¹²⁶⁸ Actually, Greece also shared these suspicions. Athens could not understand why the transition of the islands did not take place yet despite the support of both Britain and the US.¹²⁶⁹

The fact that the future of the Dodecanese was not as simple as both the British and the Greeks had assumed came up with the Soviet Union's demand for bases from the Dodecanese in September 1945 at the London Conference of Council of Foreign Ministers. During the first sessions of the meeting Britain had come with a proposal suggesting that Italy would renounce its rights in the Dodecanese in favour of Greece with the exception of Kastellorizo which would be given to Turkey, together with a

¹²⁶⁷ ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, "*Notiziario sul Dodecanneso*," (Information on the Dodecanese), 1 August 1945.

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁶⁹ Doumanis argues that Dodecanesians also feared from that Dodecanese could remain as a British protégé. Doumanis, *Myth and Memory*, p.59.

demilitarization clause.¹²⁷⁰ After a couple of sessions, the British delegation changed its proposal with regard to Kastellorizo, thus making the American and British offers alike.¹²⁷¹

After the mutual offer of Britain and the US, Molotov, the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, stated that although Moscow did not have any problems about the Greek claims, the Deputies should further study the question not excluding the demilitarization issue, before the final decision was taken owing to the fact that this area was strategically important for the Soviet Union with its proximity to the entrance to the Black Sea.¹²⁷²

This utterance of the Soviet delegation had raised doubts about the real intention of Moscow regarding the Dodecanese. These doubts mounted when Molotov questioned the demilitarized status of the other Aegean Islands that did not belong to Greece because according to the Russian Commissar, “if they were not being demilitarized there must be some reason.”¹²⁷³ Although all of the powers agreed to cede the islands to Greece, the Soviet position to send the matter to Deputies for further inquiry, especially in terms of the demilitarization, strained the Council to a great extent. The discussions almost reached an impasse when Molotov, who stated that “if he lived in North America

¹²⁷⁰ FRUS, United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States: Diplomatic papers, *General: Political and Economic Matters 1945*, vol.2, “First session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, London, September 11-October 2, 1945,” 12 September 1945, p.137. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1945v02> (accessed June 5, 2014).

¹²⁷¹ Ibid., “Record of the Sixth Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers,” 17 September 1945, p.203.

¹²⁷² Ibid.

¹²⁷³ Actually, the example was given because of the situation in the area during the Second World War: the Axis had blocked the Aegean. Ibid. “United States Delegation Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers,” 17 September 1945, p.205.

he could decide the question without delay,” rejected the desire of the Americans which insisted that the Council should have decided the issue as soon as possible.”¹²⁷⁴

Essentially, Molotov’s position was ambiguous. On the one hand, he stressed that the Soviets did not have any problems with the cession of the islands to Greece, but on the other hand, he rejected the American proposal that the Deputies should have studied not the cession, but the demilitarization clause, stating that the whole question should have been analyzed.¹²⁷⁵ Therefore, his stance led the Council to suspect from a possible Russian claim to the islands. Obviously, the doubts with regard to the Soviet attitude were not limited to the Council of the Foreign Ministers.

The press, including the Turkish ones, had begun to write about the possible Russian demands in the Aegean. For instance, *Cumhuriyet* wrote about the rumors on the Soviet desire to have bases in the Dodecanese as another sign of the Russian appetite in the Mediterranean.¹²⁷⁶ According to the newspaper, just after the demands about the Straits and Eritrea, the Soviet position about the Dodecanese showed that Moscow was making plans to dominate the whole Mediterranean region.¹²⁷⁷ The Russian plans for expansion in the Mediterranean attracted the attention of the whole world while the US Secretary of State Byrnes implicitly confirmed the rumors through his statement: “the Council was in general agreement that the Dodecanese Islands should go to Greece although the assent of one member was qualified pending the study of certain questions

¹²⁷⁴ Ibid. p.206. American Secretary Byrnes replied Molotov saying that he “was sorry that he (Molotov) was not an inhabitant of North America.”

¹²⁷⁵ Ibid. pp.207-208.

¹²⁷⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 16 September 1945.

¹²⁷⁷ Ibid. During the conference in London, Molotov emphasized that the Soviet Union was interested in Eritrea and Tripoli.

by his Government.”¹²⁷⁸ It would be explicitly suggested after the London Conference, which came to an end without a result for the Dodecanese, that the rumors about the Russian military bases on the Dodecanese were true.¹²⁷⁹

The military plans of the Soviets in the Dodecanese Islands were closely related to the ambition of Moscow to make Russia a Mediterranean power. However, apart from the Mediterranean balance of power, the military bases in the Dodecanese carried special importance for Turkey. While the Russians emphasized the proximity of the islands to the Black Sea in the peace table of the London Conference, they also stressed the adjacency of the region to the Straits.

What this dissertation designated during both the interwar and the war years, was the fact that any military establishment on the islands had the capacity to irritate Turkey due to the proximity of the islands to the Anatolian coasts, and the tie between the islands and the Dardanelles that had paved the way for the Montreux Convention. When the Soviet demands on the Straits in July 1945 are kept in mind, the further demands from the Dodecanese rendered the position for Turkey much more dangerous from the perspective of security. That is why the first Turkish interpretation of the issue in the newspapers became the inseparable nature of these two issues.¹²⁸⁰ Likewise, a Turkish diplomat in Paris would again stress this linkage to his Greek colleague in July 1946 in a way that the Soviets were interested in the islands based on the Straits.¹²⁸¹

¹²⁷⁸ *The New York Times*, 11 November 1945, *Yeni Sabah* 12 November 1945.

¹²⁷⁹ Ibid., ASMAE, Busta Dodecanneso 16, “*Conferenza di Londra: Richieste Russe di Basi Militari nel Dodecanneso*,” (The London Conference: Russian Requests of Military Bases from the Dodecanese,” 7 December 1945.

¹²⁸⁰ *Yeni Sabah*, 19 September 1945, “*Bu iki mes’ele Moskova nazarında birbirinden ayrılmaz bir bütün teşkil ediyor.*”

¹²⁸¹ Xydis, p.221.

This dissertation argues that it was no coincidence that in September, during which the London Conference took place with the aforementioned developments, the Turkish newspapers stopped commenting about the future of the Dodecanese, as did the government. Indeed, the complicated stance of Turkey towards the Dodecanese came to an end with September, during and after which the Turkish politicians made declarations about the Turkish position on territorial issues. President İsmet İnönü announced in the Turkish National Assembly that Turkey did not have any debt that could be paid from the Turkish territory and the Turkish rights, to anyone.¹²⁸² On the other hand, Turkey did not have any territorial aims to achieve either,¹²⁸³ as a direct reflection of his standpoint. It is seen that after this announcement, Turkey would not intervene into the issue as it did before, and the commentaries about the Turkish claims on the islands would cease to exist in the newspapers.

How can the position of Turkish foreign policy towards the Dodecanese be analyzed in the light of this narrative? First of all, it has already been suggested that Turkey was in desperate need of diplomatic support for its post-war foreign policy problems in terms of the Soviet demands. Therefore, Turkey did not have any desire to clash with Britain and the US based on the Dodecanese, which was basically planned to be given to Greece. It would not be analytical to risk the relationship with these two powers in a period that Turkish foreign policy faced a turning point. Therefore, Turkey regulated its vague position towards the Dodecanese in September in which the islands and the Straits had been interlinked suddenly.

¹²⁸² *Yeni Sabah*, 2 November 1945. “Açıkça söyleriz ki; Türk topraklarından ve haklarından kimseye verilecek bir borcumuz mevcut değildir.”

¹²⁸³ *Ibid.*

Second, it was neither rational nor principled to make any territorial claims while rejecting the same attitude directed towards the Turkish territory, especially on a connected matter. The same argument is also made in the memoirs of Erkin. He explains that in a correspondence took place between him and Bevin, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, it was made clear that if Turkey took an action for the Dodecanese, the Russians would act in the same way for the Straits,¹²⁸⁴ showing that Turkey had to act in the way it did.

In addition to these two arguments, it was normal that Turkey did not want to get involved in an area in which the Soviet Union was interested, to avoid more diplomatic involvement with Moscow. As a result of these dynamics, after October 1945, it is seen that Turkey followed the Dodecanese case with concern, but without any direct participation. In other words, it began to wait for the time that the islands would be ceded to Greece, with the hope that they would be given without any bases for the Soviets. The Dodecanese file in terms of sovereignty was closed for Turkey in the second half of 1945.

But, the annexation process lasted long, contrary to expectations. After the conference in London, the parties continued to discuss the issues related to the Dodecanese for months. As can be anticipated, the prolongation of the process was directly linked to the position of the Soviet Union, which constantly tried to postpone the meeting in which the issue would be handled. In addition, another demand of the Soviet Union, namely a base for the Soviet mercantile ships in the Dodecanese which would

¹²⁸⁴ Erkin, *Dışışlerinde 34 Yıl*, p.229.

supposedly strengthen the ties of Russia with the Mediterranean,¹²⁸⁵ further stressed the relationship between the parties. Although it was later suggested in the newspapers that the idea of a commercial base was the personal opinion of the Soviet representative, it is seen from the American documents that the same matter had been discussed several times after the articles.¹²⁸⁶

From April to July 1946, whenever Byrnes opened the question of the Dodecanese, Molotov rejected the discussion of the fate of islands based on a specific excuse. This tough attitude of the Russian Commissar reached to a degree that in one of the sessions, the American Secretary began to thank Molotov in a sarcastic tone for his “resourcefulness of the postponement.”¹²⁸⁷ The tension during the sessions on the Dodecanese was not limited to the US and the USSR. Similar to the fear of Britain with regard to the Russian expansionism in the Mediterranean, Molotov was constantly accusing Britain of the desire to retain all the Italian colonies for itself.¹²⁸⁸ The USSR argued that the reason behind the existence of the British soldiers in the Dodecanese was the desire of the latter to become the dominant power of the Straits.¹²⁸⁹ This showed both the harsh competition in the Mediterranean in the post-war period and the link between those two regions one more time.

¹²⁸⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 March 1946.

¹²⁸⁶ In May, the Soviet Union had declared that he gave up its demand about a commercial base in the Mediterranean. United States Department of State, Foreign relations of the United States. *Council of Foreign Ministers 1946* vol.2, “United States Delegation Record, Council of Foreign Ministers, Second Session, Fifth Informal Meeting,” 11 May 1946, p.349. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1946v02> (accessed June 8, 2014).

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, “United States Delegation Record, Council of Foreign Ministers, Second Session, Tenth Informal Meeting,” 20 June 1945, p.563.

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* “United States Delegation Record, Council of Foreign Ministers, Second Session, First Informal Meeting,” 2 May 1945, p.221.

¹²⁸⁹ That is why the British thought that they had proven their stance on the contrary of the Russian assumption when they finally decided to retreat their troops from the Dodecanese toward the end of the year. *Cumhuriyet*, 9 October 1946.

The deadlock between the parties came to an end in June in the way that the British and Americans wanted. They decided to cede all the islands including Kastellorizo to Greece with a demilitarized status. The Soviet retreat on the issue was interpreted as tied to the Russian calculations about the future of Greece, which would probably fall under Soviet domination owing to the rising power of the communists therein according to Moscow.¹²⁹⁰

However, demilitarization continued to be a subject in the discussion. While the article concerning the Dodecanese in the draft peace treaty states that the “islands shall be and shall remain demilitarized,” whether it would be demilitarized or “completely” demilitarized was discussed. Although both terms were basically prohibiting all naval, military, and military air installations and fortifications in a specified territory as well as in its territorial waters; in a normally demilitarized region, the administration could recruit a restricted number of internal security personnel equipped with weapons and military training while in a completely demilitarized area, the internal security personnel with weapon, the visits of military, naval, and air units to the area, and any accommodation regarding military forces were forbidden.¹²⁹¹

This time, the Greeks strongly opposed the complete demilitarization of the islands.¹²⁹² The idea of demilitarization for the Greeks, putting the complete one aside, was a much more different phenomenon than the Allies assumed. According to Greece, prohibition of the naval and air bases could be acceptable, but the prohibition of the

¹²⁹⁰ Xydis, p.222.

¹²⁹¹ The National Archives, WO106/3262, Telegram from War Office to Commander in Chief MELF, 2 November 1946, Telegram from U.K. Delegation in Paris to Foreign Office, 21 September 1946.

¹²⁹² The National Archives, WO106/3262, Report by War Office “Demilitarization of the Dodecanese,” 3 September 1946, Telegram from U.K. Delegation in Paris to Foreign Office, 24 September 1946.

fortifications should have been related only to permanent ones.¹²⁹³ In addition, demilitarization should permit the recruitment of land forces with war material that was necessary for the defense of the islands, not just for the internal security role.¹²⁹⁴ Furthermore, there should be “no restriction of anti-aircraft gun, air sea rescue units, air force fighter or, on Greek warships mooring in harbors for short duration of maneuvers.”¹²⁹⁵

At the end of the process, the term “demilitarization,” rather than “complete demilitarization,” was used in the peace treaty, as it had been typed in the draft treaty. Yet, parallel to the abovementioned stance of Athens, the Greek problem with the demilitarization clause began just after the cession took place with the signing of the peace treaty, in February 1947, and with the transition of the administration in the islands to the Greek Military in March 1947. It is seen that the British Foreign Office discussed the future of the Greek troops in the Dodecanese with the British Military Mission in the islands since the Greek General Staff asked to establish a military headquarters and a recruitment office in Rhodes.¹²⁹⁶

While the British Military Mission asked whether London could turn a blind eye to these Greek demands, the Foreign Office officials emphasized that Britain could not connive with Greece in a breach of the treaty, which prohibited the establishment of military quarters.¹²⁹⁷ However, it seems that the discomfort about the demilitarized status of the Dodecanese continued in a way that the Soviet Union, which could not have

¹²⁹³ The National Archives, WO106/3262, Telegram from U.K. Delegation in Paris to Foreign Office, 21 September 1946.

¹²⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁹⁶ The National Archives, FO371/67027, Telegram from the British Embassy in Athens to Foreign Office, 29 October 1947.

¹²⁹⁷ Ibid.

bases in the area as it desired, declared its uneasiness with the use of the airfields by the Royal Hellenic Air Forces in the Dodecanese, in order to fight against banditry on the islands.¹²⁹⁸ The American interpretation of the issue was that although the treaty prohibited bases and fortifications, Greece had the right to use the military installations in the Dodecanese for internal matters.¹²⁹⁹

These discussions about the Dodecanese demilitarization continued among the parties thereafter. This shows that the Greek efforts to break the demilitarization clause of the Paris Peace Treaty dated back to 1947, rather than the 1970s which was associated with the Greek-Turkish tension in the Aegean Sea with regard to militarization in the islands mainly based on the Cyprus problem. That is to say, a new epoch, in which one of the actors changed although the dynamics of problems remained same, had begun in the island-mainland relations beginning with 1947, when the islands were finally transferred to Greece.

In 1991 in which the Turkish and Greek relationship was experiencing problems over the Aegean territorial waters and the continental shelf, President Özal made an important declaration about the Dodecanese to the Greek newspaper *Apoyevmatini*:

These islands belonged to the Ottoman Empire, not to Greece. They were transferred to Italy, than to Germany. During the Second World War, the Germans said, ‘come and get the islands’ to us. İsmet İnönü

¹²⁹⁸ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States. *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union 1948*, vol.4, “Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece,” 29 July 1948, p.116. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1948v04> (accessed June 21, 2014).

¹²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.117.

did not go. If I were İnönü, I would go and get them. On this issue, Turkey made a historical mistake. If these islands belonged to Turkey, there would be no problems today.¹³⁰⁰

The statement of Özal does not represent a single example. Whenever the tension in the Aegean arose, articles and serials were published in Turkish newspapers, indicating the Turkish fault in the transition of the islands to Greece. Every article claimed something, yet usually without attributing the assumptions to a certain document. For instance, Feridun Cemal Erkin had to disavow one such article published in *Hürriyet* in 1972, through which İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, one of the former Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey had claimed that although Turkey had been invited to the negotiations in Paris in 1946 with regard to the sovereignty of the islands, Turkey had not answered the invitation and had not gone to France, and thus had lost the chance to take the islands.¹³⁰¹ Erkin said that such an invitation did not take place.¹³⁰² If such an invitation occurred, a copy of the document should have been in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹³⁰³ This example shows well how the issue of the Dodecanese has been handled based on only one dimension, or on erroneous information.

This chapter discussed the stance of Turkey on the future of the Dodecanese and how it cannot be evaluated in itself; in other words, without taking the other dynamics of Turkish foreign policy into consideration. Therefore, it challenges the dominant

¹³⁰⁰ *Sabah*, 8 May 1991. “Bu adalar Yunanistan’a değil, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’na aitti. Ardından İtalyanlara sonra da Almanlara geçti. Almanlar 2. Dünya Savaşı’nda bize “Gelin bu adaları alın” dedi. İsmet İnönü gitmedi. İnönü’nün yerinde olsam gider alırdım. Bu konuda Türkiye tarihi bir hata yapmıştır. Eğer bu adalar Türkiye’ye ait olsaydı, bugün sorun olmayacaktı.”

¹³⁰¹ Erkin, p.227. Erkin emphasized the same incident in his article in *Milliyet* in 1982, *Milliyet*, 15 March 1982.

¹³⁰² Ibid.

¹³⁰³ Ibid.

discourse, as the statement of Özal exemplifies, that Turkey should have been more active and taken the islands. This chapter argued that although Turkey discussed a certain action against the Dodecanese with the Allied military parties during the war years, both the American and British diplomatic circles supported the Greek claims on the islands beginning with 1940. In this regard, it is questionable that Turkey had a chance on the Dodecanese with the exception of Kastellorizo, about which the US changed its mind in the last minute in favor of Greece, even if it concentrated its effort on this diplomatic matter in the post-war period.

The same argument could be made for the much debated and ambiguous German offers, because even if they had been made for the Dodecanese instead of Chios and Lesbos as discussed above and even if they had been accepted, taking the sovereignty of the islands would not have been a realistic move and probably would not have yielded any “permanent” result, since the Germans were on the defeated side, the Greeks were victorious party with the support of the British and Americans about the Dodecanese, and the Turks were “stubbornly” non-belligerent until the end.

In terms of the post-war period, it is argued that Turkish foreign policy was dealing with a major threat coming from the Soviet Union, which desired certain changes in the passage regime of the Straits and bases therein as well as territories from Eastern Anatolia. In this respect, Ankara, which was isolated in the international arena was faced with the Soviet threat, and adopted an official discourse of “neither giving nor taking” anything. But, until this approach of İnönü in September 1945, Turkey examined issue specifically with the British from time to time. In other words, it was not indifferent to the question; actually, it usually contradicted its position of not having territorial claims, constituted during the war. In the final analysis, the main denominator

of the issue in terms of Turkey became the post-war needs of Turkish foreign policy, based on the Soviet threat. Therefore, this chapter emphasizes that the epoch that the islands were transferred to Greece necessitates a multifaceted approach to the matter, exceeding far beyond simplistic discourses of the post-1970s when the deterioration of the Turkish-Greek relations re-opened the issue into discussion.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

When the islands were transferred to Greece in 1947, a new epoch in the Aegean Archipelago, in which Turkey and Greece would take the leading roles, began. As some parts of this study emphasized, the subsequent period would not be free of problems. Actually, even if the problematic nature of the islands concerning the foreign and security policy is set aside, the Dodecanese never fell from the agenda, at least in terms of the Turkish public opinion. Even during the period on which this dissertation was written, newspaper articles and cartoons in the social media were talking about the theme of how Turkey could “give” these islands to another power. This reproach, usually devoid of basic knowledge on the two transfer period of the islands both in 1923 and in 1947, is closely linked to the proximity of the islands to the Turkish mainland. That is to say, the major problem was the fact that Turkey was faced with another power very near its territory, as Şükrü Kaya, former Interior Minister of Turkey, had described as the extension of the Anatolian land that was needed to defend Turkey.¹³⁰⁴

This geography of the Aegean Sea has always been problematic for Turkey, thus making the islands an important dynamic of Turkish foreign and security policy. In the period between 1923 and 1947, this dynamic was felt too much, sometimes to the extent

¹³⁰⁴ Speech of the parliamentarian of Menteşe, Şükrü Kaya: *TBMM Zabıt Cerideleri*, İçtima: 7, Cilt: 3, 21.8.1339, p.238. For more information about the speech, see Chapter 2.

of directing Turkish foreign policy. When Italy occupied the islands in 1912 and gained the sovereign rights of the Dodecanese in 1923 with the Lausanne Treaty, the islands were separated from the mainland for the first time in centuries. Even though the islands in the northern part of the Aegean Sea facing Anatolia, was also under the rule of a different power, namely Greece, what made the Dodecanese more special than the other island groups in the region was the fact that a more powerful state had appeared near the southwestern Anatolia with an aggressive foreign policy, ceaselessly declaring its intent to expand in the Mediterranean and fortifying the islands constantly.

The Italian stance toward the Dodecanese after 1923 created a situation in the Aegean Sea described by this dissertation as “on the verge of the war.” Indeed, Turkey was faced with a danger of another military clash and occupation just after the foundation of the Republic, which had come into being after long sequence of wars. The years after 1923 were one of the most troublesome epochs of Turkey, which had to deal with major foreign policy and security issues, yet had no many international supporters, but adversaries.

The problems based on Mosul, which was negotiated diplomatically with Britain alongside a military showdown on the Eastern borders, were reflected on the relations of Turkey with other powers like Italy and Greece, which was in collaboration with each other. In this sense, Turkey’s fear about the Dodecanese doubled in terms of a likelihood of an attack on its southwestern coasts. This fear determined the relationship of Turkey with the islands. It was argued that Ankara, which did not have major alliances in the diplomatic sphere, with the exception of Soviet Russia, tried to strengthen its western shores with its scarce military sources, in order to protect the country from such an attack at that time. This fear was one of the most influential dynamics of Turkish foreign

policy, which took the situation in the islands in consideration in taking major decisions, like the one regarding Mosul. This action-reaction chain in the relationship between Turkey and the Dodecanese Islands in which Turkey adjusted both its foreign and military policies accordingly shows how a small group of islands can affect a much bigger territorial entity, especially if an expansionist and more powerful states rule them. In this regard, it is suggested that in the period until the end of 1926, the term Dodecanese became equated with “problem,” a serious one that was full of tension, military demonstrations, intimidation, and spying activities in the region, on the brink of a war indeed.

Other problems also emerged beyond war and peace in the Aegean Sea, waiting to be solved in a much quieter environment since they necessitated a diplomatic negotiation process. The dispute over the sovereignty of the islets around Kastellorizo began just after 1923 because of the vague character of the related article in the Lausanne Treaty, sometimes leading to mutual occupation of the islets and the military tension in their vicinity. The problems were not limited to the islets. Even if the legal separation of the islands from the mainland took place officially, the people who lived in the region still tied to the two shores. There were problems about their properties, which remained on the facing coasts, about smuggling between the shores leading to tension between the parties, and about the rights to practice fishing and sponge fishing in the both side of the sea, in which the borders were vague. Despite the existence of such problems, which affected the lives of the islanders, these years on the brink of war between 1923 and 1926 were not suitable for necessary diplomatic action to solve them.

The discussion of those problems coincided with the last years of the 1920s, when the first tensions were ameliorated. It was argued in this dissertation that after the

cession of the period on the brink of a war, due to a relative detente between the parties in the diplomatic contacts, the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign policy continue to prove problematic. The problems were handled in the sphere of diplomacy, rather than the military terms. The Dodecanese continued to pose problems to Turkey, which pursued diplomatic negotiations with Italy for years without concrete results with the exception of one issue, sometimes elevating the tension in the region. It was shown that the only issue that had been solved at the end of the period was the partition of the Kastellorizo Islets. In this sense, while the Dodecanesians proved unable to improve their economic rights, or property problems, Turkey's project to determine the boundaries between the Anatolian coasts and the whole Dodecanese did not yield any positive results.

It was asserted that apart from the problems about the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign policy, the border problems together with the effort to claim the islets with undetermined sovereignties dates back to this period, rather than to the post-1950s, as is commonly assumed. Likewise, it was shown that the the parties discussed and challenged the territorial waters, though as a new concept in the international law at that time, especially in terms of expanding the generally accepted three miles clause to six miles based on strategic and economic notions, not being very different from the recent problems in the Aegean.

Despite the problems, this period between 1927 and 1933 was an aberrant phase in terms of the place of the Dodecanese Islands in Turkish foreign policy that continued until 1945, since the "war" theme in the relations had taken a backstage. After 1933, military concerns began to overshadow the diplomatic ones again. The last years of the interwar period in terms of the Dodecanese dynamic in Turkish foreign policy marked a poignant epoch since the expansionist and aggressive attitude of Italy returned with

greater confidence. In this sense, it was argued that Turkey took the Dodecanese dynamic into consideration to a great extent.

However, as Italy was more confident on the eve of the Second World War, so was Turkey, especially as compared to the years after the foundation of the Republic. Turkey was now an esteemed, equal member of the international arena. In addition, the balance of power in Europe was different in a way that the rising Italian fortress in the Aegean Sea, as a strategic point vis-a-vis the whole Mediterranean, had become a big question mark also for other powers, like Britain. In other words, the Dodecanese was no longer the sole problem of Turkey.

Turkey took several diplomatic initiatives in this atmosphere to provide its security. The Montreux Convention for the Straits and the rapprochement with Britain and later with France at the beginning of the Second World War should be seen from this perspective. Similarly, it was suggested that other issues, like the Balkan Entente and even the sanjak of Alexandretta, were linked to situation in the Mediterranean, in which the Aegean Archipelago played an important role for Turkey.

For example, although the Balkan Entente was a formation based on Italian and Bulgarian revisionism as well as on economic and cultural themes, the ardent Italian support for a Bulgarian outlet to the Aegean Sea just at the time of conclusion of the pact shows that the Dodecanese, and in general the whole Archipelago, was tied to the Balkans, and vice versa.

Likewise, Turkish claims on the sanjak of Alexandretta, beginning from 1936, were related to the nationalistic and historical interests. In other words, the issue had its own dynamics. But, it is also important to emphasize that the dossiers in the archives of

Turkish General Staff specifically deal with the intrusion of Italian influence in the region. That is to say, the military officials at some point considered even Alexandretta, related to Syria and France, in terms of the Italian threat, because from a strategic point of view, a possible Italian sovereignty in the region, for which efforts were being made according to the intelligence, could constitute a nightmare for Turkey since the the Dodecanese had already compressed its western coasts.

While pursuing an active foreign policy mostly in relation to the Italians in the Dodecanese Islands, Turkey tried to fortify its borders militarily at the same time. It was shown that the most important weakness in the Turkish defense, namely the demilitarized status of the Straits, had come to an end in 1936, making the vulnerable western coasts much more secure. The Turkish military constantly fortified these coastal regions, from Çanakkale to Antalya, during the years after 1933-1934. The impact of the Dodecanese on Turkish security policy in this regard revealed itself in fortifications, troop movements, war games, high-ranking visits and inspections, and even in the military discussions about the construction of roads in the region.

When the interwar period came to an end, the islands were still being regarded as influential by Turkey. The Tripartite Pact between Turkey, Britain, and France designates this point well. Apart from being one of the reasons for Turkey to come closer to these two powers as the war approached, the Dodecanese became an important point for Turkey in terms of the military negotiations after their alliance came into being. However, it was suggested that the attitude of Turkey towards the Dodecanese was complicated in 1939 and 1940. While the Turkish officials were still concerned with an Italian attack from the Dodecanese, they were also making plans of occupation with

their allies. In other words, the islands had both offensive and defensive meanings for Turkey.

When Turkey decided to be non-belligerent in the Second World War, these occupation plans were shelved. But, this dissertation argued that despite the diversity of major foreign policy and security problems of Turkey, the Dodecanese continued to be important. In other words, although the place of the islands in Turkish foreign policy, the main aim of which was to remain outside of the war, was not like that of the interwar period, the Dodecanese always remained on the table, not only of the Turkish government, but also of the Allies.

In terms of security, the Turks considered the islands in conjunction with Thrace because all this area was under the domination of the Axis powers after 1941. With the fall of Italy in 1943, the Nazis became the sole power in the region. Therefore, this dissertation emphasized that when Axis closed the whole Aegean after 1941, the focus of the existing literature only on Thrace is deficient, though not erroneous.

The islands persisted to be a problem during those years. The Allies were also concerned with their possible use by the Germans, in relation to Turkey, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. The efforts of the British to capture the islands in 1943 reflects how the British tried both to take this strategic region in order to hinder the Nazis to act against the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and to open the Aegean route, which was directly related to the Balkans and the Straits, and thus to Russia. It was meaningful that Churchill stubbornly insisted on clearing the Aegean Sea of the Axis because he thought that the only way to convince the Turks to enter the war was by capturing of the Dodecanese. This shows how the relationship between Turkey and the islands was perceived at that time.

The diplomatic negotiations had a similar approach. After 1940, the granting- or bribing- of some of the Dodecanese Islands to the Turks was regarded as a way to make the Turks enter the war. Indeed, the Dodecanese Islands were seen as the means to acquire something from Turkey owing to the importance of the region for Ankara, though this was not successful. This understanding reignited the sovereignty problem of the Dodecanese long before the end of the war. Both the situation and the fate of the Dodecanese in relation to Turkey became a point of discussion in the Allied meetings, as well as the well-known conferences of the Second World War. In the meantime, however, while Turkey emphasized that it had neither the intent to enter the war nor a territorial claim on the Dodecanese, it paradoxically continued to stress the strategic importance of the islands for Anatolia regarding the future of the islands, and to discuss in the sessions with the Allies about its preference to attack specifically the Dodecanese rather than the northern Aegean Islands in case of a landing. This was an important indication that Turkey, even if non-belligerent, continued to discuss the Dodecanese throughout the war.

The problems were not restricted to Turkey's security understanding or the discussions that took place among the Allies about the region. Turkey had to deal with other problems about the Dodecanese as well. The most important phenomenon in this respect was the flux of people from the Aegean; and from the Dodecanese, especially after 1943 to Anatolia owing to famine and occupation on the islands. Turkey had to deal with the refugees and POWs, as another example of how the proximity of the region to the Anatolian coasts influenced Turkey. The humanitarian assistance either of Turkey or of the Allies to the region, especially as the center of the aid coordination for the Dodecanese also could be seen from this perspective. In conclusion, the Dodecanese

dynamic in Turkish foreign policy was a multifaceted matter during the war years, exceeding the military calculations.

When the Second World War came to an end, Turkey's problems with the fronting coast did not terminate. A major issue concerning the Dodecanese to be decided was the sovereignty of the islands. This is a highly contentious issue for Turkish public opinion since the islands had been transferred to Greece in 1947 in a way that the Turkish press brought up the issue again and again, as the tension between Turkey and Greece escalated over the Aegean and Cyprus after the 1950s. This dissertation argued that the claims that Turkey had lost its chance to take the islands either reflect simplistic views independent of Turkey's position in the international arena between 1944 and 1946, or depend on vague historical data.

In this regard, it was noted that the post-war period in which the Dodecanese issue was held was one of the most vulnerable times for Turkish foreign policy. The country was faced with the Soviet threat, without any major international support owing to the policies implemented during the war-time period. It was in an intense need of diplomatic assistance, especially from Britain and the US, which were favored the Greek claims. When the Soviet demands regarding the Dodecanese and the Straits are added to the picture, why Turkey did not press too hard about the issue especially after the second half of 1945 is understandable. The Dodecanese became a much broader issue for Turkey, which had to adopt a principle of "not giving and not taking territory."

However, this dissertation also showed that Turkey was never indifferent to the fate of the Dodecanese. In the first half of 1945, Ankara sought ways to express its views about the islands, even contradicting sometimes its official position of not having any territorial claims. But, as was emphasized, the decisive factor in this regard became

the Soviet threat, against which Turkey had to be contented with the Western support of its territorial integrity, ending the period with the transfer of the whole group to Greece in 1947. Based on these facts, it was seen that the end of the Second World War did not bring a relief to the relationship of Turkey with the facing coast. Transfer of the islands to Greece, on the other hand, ushered in a new epoch in this relationship.

What all these historical narratives shows is that beginning from 1923, the Dodecanese became an important dynamic of Turkish foreign and security policy calculations that always took the region into consideration. Interestingly enough, these small islands posed big problems to the mainland despite the fact that the island studies literature regards the latter as much more powerful vis-à-vis the island geographies. But, although the existing literature shows islands as territories to be occupied by mainlands, the case of the Dodecanese in relation to Turkey was not an anomaly because the ruling administrations in those islands were more powerful states than Turkey throughout this period; such as Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Britain.

In this problematic relationship, Turkey perceived the islands as a security threat to the western Anatolian coasts on the way to the Straits. Therefore, with the existence of expansionist Italy and warring Germany later on in the Dodecanese, Turkey expected a clash in the region most of the time. This dissertation suggested that Turkey never engaged in war in the region, but never made peace either due to this possibility. This position of Turkey towards the islands could be best described as having always been on alert.

This vigilance brought concrete decisions and initiatives to Turkish foreign policy as well as active military calculations for the region. It also should be noted that while influencing Turkish decisions and calculations, this relationship shaped other

regional and bilateral relations of Turkey with other European powers and the attitude of the other Europeans towards it at the same time. For instance, the Dodecanese was a key to Turkish-Italian relationship in the interwar era since Rome was the colonial power of the area as well as the reason that Ankara was anxious about the region due to the policies of the former. However, what is important to emphasize is that the Dodecanese Islands were one of the most important determinants of Turkish-British relationship as well. The strategic location of the islands in the Mediterranean resulted in a situation in which both Ankara and London used the region in their diplomatic contacts. Thus, this small region did not just influence Turkish foreign policy, or bilateral relations with the colonial power, but also important diplomatic relations with other powers.

This dissertation also showed that even when Turkey was not concerned with the threat of war; it still had to deal with problematic issues about the region. First of all, the maritime borders in the region including the problem about the sovereignty over the islets became a significant issue for Turkey in terms of determining them. This period in which Turkey discussed the borders, islets, and the territorial waters was the predecessor of the post-1950s. Therefore, it sheds light on the history of the problem, showing that some issues were not unique to the problematic relationship between Ankara and Athens.

Second, the separation of the two shores which had always been used as one unit, led to problems for the economic and commercial activities of the people as well as property related issues. These problems were not solved in the meantime although it kept the Turkish authorities busy throughout the period. Third, the proximity of the region to the Turkish mainland made Ankara to deal with unexpected results, like

migration. In consequence, Turkey's problems with the islands never ended, even though they did not evoke war.

Some questions raised by this dissertation remain unanswered. Although this study examined different aspects of the place of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy, it also posed some questions for further research. One question is how the existence of Turkish community (*millet*) specifically in Rhodes and Kos influenced Turkish foreign policy in this era is not so clear based on the existing archival resources. Although their communal fate is relatively known, both in the pre- and post- 1947 periods, how the relationship between Turkey and the Turkish community during this time period fared could bring some interesting facts about the position of this community regarding Kemalist Turkey or narratives about intelligence activities. For instance, in the Italian archival sources there are some documents that mention the problems that the Turkish community felt about the laicism of the Republic in the 1920s, the activities of the regime opponents that fled to the islands, and the anxiety of the Italians about the policies of Turkey in the 1930s in terms of its effort to recruit the Dodecanesian Turks for Turkish schools. However, such references in one document are not enough to draw concrete results.

Second, as referred in the introduction section, the relationship of Turkey with the northern islands in this period constitutes a question mark. Although similar conclusions could be made, for instance, about the economic and commercial ties due to the position of Turkey to permit only co-nationals to practice economic activities in the Turkish territorial waters, the security perception of Turkey regarding the northern Aegean Islands, especially before 1941 could be different. Therefore, a comparison between the northern and southern shores based on more information in this period may

not only complete the whole picture in terms of Turkey's relationship with the Aegean Archipelago before the 1950s, but also put forward the peculiar character of the Dodecanese for Ankara. All these questions necessitate further research and could be answered with research in both the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, if opened. When these archives, especially the latter one, are searched; more data will come to light about the topic of this dissertation.

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