



ATATURK'S FOREIGN MINISTER TEVFIK RUSTU ARAS

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ABSTRACT. Tevfik Rüştü Aras is one of the most influential statesmen in Turkish political life. Turkey and the world were passing through a very critical period during Aras' ministry. Turkish foreign policy was shaped by Atatürk's perspective that was "Peace at home, Peace in the world" but it was not so easy to implement in world politics. Specifically, Turkey's affair with United Kingdom (UK) was a determining factor in Turkish foreign policy. The inter-war period led to the emergence of fascist and ultra-nationalist movements in Europe. Tevfik Rüştü Aras achieved to nationalize Dardanelles and Bosphorus in favor of the dynamics of balance of power in Europe with The Montreux Straits Convention. Atatürk who was a founder of the Turkish Republic predicted that the new world war would come up in a very short time. Thus, Atatürk and his foreign minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras believed that Turkey could only protect her national security and borders with regional pacts. Furthermore, these regional pacts would have the potential to make progress to avoid a new global war. This study aims to enlighten briefly Aras' foreign ministry period and put important approaches to his policies that can be inspirations for current regional problems. During this study, important newspapers and magazines, as well as archival documents, books, and articles were benefited from.

Keywords: *Ataturk, Tevfik Rustu Aras, Turkish foreign policy, regional pacts, international relations*

INTRODUCTION

The only foreign minister of the founder of Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Dr. Tevfik Rüştü Aras had undoubtedly steered Turkish foreign policy in a fragile period in the history of politics around the world and Europe that was full of political and economic crises. Although he was a medical doctor, he served as the foreign minister from 1924 until Atatürk's death, 1938, due to his close friendship with Atatürk and his trust in him. It was observed that the foreign policy of Turkey was started to be shaped and solidified of new Turkey under the ministry of Dr. Aras.

During his stay in Paris, where one of the important centers of the Committee of Union and Progress was located, Dr. Aras became friends with then influential names such as Doctor Nazım, Hüsrev Sami, Ahmet Rıza and Bahattin Şakir. However, his acquaintance with the politics mainly took place after the effective friendship with Mustafa Kemal, with whom he met during his visit to Izmir to go to Thessaloniki (Tanju, 1987). Dr. Aras, who went to Anatolia during the national struggle, joined the parliament on July 1st, 1920, after Mahmut Bey, the Menteşe deputy, was martyred by the rebels, in the elections held for the first period of the Grand National Assembly (Coker, 1995).

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk attributed great importance to foreign policies as much as domestic affairs during his efforts in establishing the new Republic of Turkey from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire that has gone down in history after six centuries. While

the War of Independence was continuing, the Ottoman Empire approved the sharing of national pact lands among the occupiers with the Sevres Agreement signed with the occupying states on August 10th, 1920, Turkey showed great military success and diplomatic success with the Treaty of Lausanne signed on July 24th, 1923, and received international diplomatic recognition.

The most important word of Atatürk summarizing his foreign policy is "Peace at home, peace in the world". Atatürk, who has aimed at lasting peace since the beginning of the national struggle, has tried to protect it after ensuring the security of the Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) borders and the independence of the country. Believing that the war must only be fought for national independence and home defense, Atatürk marked these important words in February 1923, "War must be mandatory and vital. As long as the life of the nation is not compromised, war is murder." (Ataturk's Discourses and Statements, 1952).

One of the most important factors that determine a country's foreign policy is its geostrategic and geographical location (Kamel, 2014). With the proclamation of the Republic, Turkey has been neighbors with powerful states. In the east, Turkey was neighboring the Soviet Union, Britain with the Iraqi mandate and the island of Cyprus, France with the Syrian mandate, Italy as it mandated the Dodecanese islands and the Kastellorizo. Thus, Turkey became neighbors with the then most powerful countries and began to follow a more realistic foreign policy aware of this responsibility (Esmer & Sander, 2005). The understanding of contemporary diplomacy was adopted in foreign policy principles oriented at full independence, national sovereignty, and modernization. Undoubtedly, the opposite regimes that emerged between the two wars played a major role in this. Turkey aimed to have a voice in international diplomacy both by ensuring national security and by building new alliance systems. The most important examples of this are the Balkan Pact in 1934 and the Sa'dabad Pact founded in 1937. In this way, Turkey will take responsibility for the problems in its geography and make collaborations in its region and the international platforms. This understanding should be considered as one of the most important requirements of Turkish foreign policy.

In the process, where the foreign policy of new Turkey is determined under Atatürk's leadership, Tefik Rüşti Aras was the person that contributed the most to these policies with successful practices. Deserving the title of "Atatürk's unchanging foreign minister", Aras fulfilled his duty by consulting with Atatürk with the awareness of his heavy responsibilities. The most important one of the proofs of this is him constantly saying in the majority of his speeches that Turkey's foreign policy is built on peace (Sencer, 2006). Aras has almost completely followed Atatürk's recommendations and suggestions for foreign policy. To illustrate this, on his return to Geneva in May 1931, he stated that he would not make any statement to the press members without meeting with İsmet Pasha and Atatürk (Cumhuriyet, 1931). On his return from his visit to Romania on June 9th, 1937, which was another important trip, he stated; "I came from Romania, kissed my chief's hand and reported my compliments. I received his compliments and received his orders. I'm going to Ankara tomorrow evening." (Akşam, 1937)

Tevfik Rüşti Aras has certainly faced various difficulties during his ministry. The most prominent among these are the differences of opinion he had with İsmet İnönü on some issues. Undoubtedly, people were curious about how Atatürk behaved in these situations. Still, Atatürk told Aras after his having become the foreign minister; "I will always help you." (Tanju, 1987). Based on his promise, it can be said that Atatürk preferred Aras. It is noteworthy that among the most important events demonstrating

this, during the preparation phase of the Balkan Pact and the Nyon Conference, is Atatürk's preference for Aras related to tensions between Aras and İsmet Pasha.

As Atatürk's close friend and of course with his personal ability, foresight and diplomacy skills, Tevfik Rüşti Aras successfully represented Turkey at international meetings and diplomatic negotiations and signed several international agreements that were influential worldwide. Aras, while striving for world peace, also having worked with self-devotion through the understanding that "Countries do not have eternal hospitality and hostility, but have eternal interests," which is the most accurate and unchanging base of interstate relations, has managed to leave a permanent foreign policy heritage in the Turkish foreign policy and political history.

Foreign Policy Developments in Tevfik Rüşti Aras Period

Turkish-British Relations and the Mosul Question

Mosul has been one of the most fundamental issues of the Republic of Turkey since its declaration. Within the area of approximately 90 thousand km² of Mosul province, there are Süleymaniye, Mosul, and Kirkuk banners. Mosul is ancient geography, where the Turkmen population lived in the Ottoman borders and has had a historical and cultural connection ever since the existence of the Turks (Yalçın, 2000). With the industrial revolution and the discovery of petroleum in the 19th century, the strategic importance of the region has greatly increased. With the Sykes-Picot Agreement signed in 1916, which was one of the most important secret agreements involving the sharing of Ottoman lands during the First World War, the petrol regions, including Mosul, were planned to be shared among the imperialist countries.

Before and during the Treaty of Lausanne, the interest of the great powers in the region was about owning or controlling energy resources. For the Lausanne Conference in Istanbul, Turkey wanted to save the Straits area and Mosul from foreign invasion. Mosul was of great importance for Turkey, but the status of the Straits was even more so. Thus, the following provision could be found in the matter of definitive instructions to be from Turkey in talks about Mosul: "Iraq border: Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk, and Mosul districts will be requested if another situation occurs at the conference, instructions will be requested from the government." (Şimşir, 2005) The Treaty of Lausanne is an international text that has reached the Misak-ı Milli (national pact) goal, except for the Mosul issue and a few exceptions. With this document, which is the founding treaty of Turkey, Turkey has become a part of international law and gained the sovereign, independent state status. Turkey has now gained the security it has desired, as it had, to some degree, given up its regional interest centers (Hale, 2003).

At the Lausanne Conference, the Mosul Problem could not be resolved. Turkey-Iraq border, which could literally not be drawn, the UK and Turkey have decided to settle the issue among them. Should the two states could not agree, a consensus was reached to bring the issue to the League of Nations. Thus, the Mosul Question that could not be settled in Lausanne was transferred to the new Republic of Turkey (Şimşir, 2005).

Before the matter was raised to the LN, the Haliç Conference was held on May 19th, 1924 at the request of England (Uçarol, 1979). During the talks, the Turkish delegation was chaired by the President of the Grand National Assembly and Istanbul deputy Fethi Okyar, and the British delegation was chaired by the Iraqi High Commissioner Sir Percy Cox. Opinions similar to the ones defended in Lausanne were put forth in this meeting also; Fethi Bey stated in these words the need for Mosul to not be separated

from Turkey in regard to geographical and racial standpoint (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1974):

"Turks and Kurds are two brothers who united their political fortunes forever. They have constituted a Republic and through the ideal of parity, they benefit from the same rule of law and religion via the same politics and concessions."

The Mosul question in the League of Nations (LN) began to be discussed on September 20th, 1924. In the opinion of Turkey, plebiscites should have been made in Mosul. But England regarded the issue to only be about the determination of the borderline between Iraq and Turkey. Fethi Bey said: "It is the irrevocable denial that every border issue is a promise of land" regarding this approach by England (Erim, 1946). The League of Nations, which was already under the control of the United Kingdom, has decided on the Mosul issue to keep the status quo. According to this; 1- Mosul will be considered part of Iraq and will be kept under the British mandate for 25 years, 2- The borderline between Turkey and Iraq will be determined as the one that was set in Brussels (Walters, 1986). According to the opinion of the commission established within the League of Nations about Mosul, LN decided to establish a three-person committee consisting of neutral states in line with the opinion of England. This commission consisted of Hungarian Count Teleki, Belgian Colonel Poulis, and Swiss A. Wirsén. Meanwhile, as the British were trying to acquire new lands, border conflicts were seen in the north. Therefore, on October 29th, 1925, the British drew a line from a place separating Mosul from Hakkari and called this line the "Brussels Line" (Kılıç, 2008). The British representatives, on the other hand, have claimed rights over the Hakkari province, putting forward their previous claims to ensure that the Mosul province remains within the borders of Iraq after sitting around the conference table, let alone accept the Turkish view. British representatives paid special attention to the situation of the Christian Assyrians in Mosul province, so they made excessive claims on country affairs (Edmonds, 1957).

This decision reached by the League of Nations was not due to the justification of the theses put forward by Iraq or England. The influence of England on the League of Nations caused the organization's bias on the political side and tried to get back at Turkey for not defeating it on the battlefields via diplomatic threats and pressure.

Tevfik Rüşti Aras has made important contributions to the issue of Mosul. Aras, while discussing the commission report on Mosul in Geneva, stated that Mosul was not a part of Iraq and stressed that under no circumstances Turkey would give up its rights over Mosul. Moreover, Aras stated that Turkish, Kurdish and Sunni Arabs living in this geography had similar characteristics in terms of customs, traditions, and beliefs, that Britain wanted all of Mosul in the 1923 Lausanne Conference, and that the British had no distinct goal as seen in the 1924 Haliç Conference, where the British wanted to seize the Hakkari province (Menemencioglu, 1935). The recommendations of the Commission caused violent reactions and objections from both Turkish people and Turkish representatives in Geneva to be voiced. Aras, who came to Geneva instead of Fethi, stated that LN can only decide within the limits drawn by the pact of the League. As a matter of fact, such situations were pointed out in Articles 24, 48, and 107 of the Treaty of Lausanne (Gönlübol & Sar, 1997). In addition, Tefvik Rüşti Bey argued that the Parliament could not decide to bind the parties on this issue without the positive votes of the states that are parties to the dispute.

Although it was within the boundaries of the National Pact, Turkey has not attempted to get Mosul back forcefully after the decision of the LN Assembly. Turkey exhausted after the war embarked on a revolution and development movement. A new war could stagnate this effort in Turkey indefinitely. For these reasons, the Turkish

government has taken the negotiations with the UK and Iraq based on the decision of the League (Gönlübol & Sar, 1997). Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras said in his speech on June 7th, 1926 on the occasion of the ratification of the treaty (Esmer, 1953):

“Thanks to the struggle of our nation sustained through the overwhelming perseverance left behind by the fallen state for our generation, the interest of our national revolution was to come to the point of being ready for a state of affairs with a great deal, in order to achieve the victory as soon as possible and not to put an end to peace at the end of the day. According to the most important axis of the Turkish Republic mainly representing the strength, is to work as a system and hit civil milestones, we endured sacrifices in the name of the peace at home and peace in the world as well as the independence and well-being of Iraq, and in this plot of land issue that remained unchanged to normalize our relations with the Great Britain Empire. ”

Turkish-Soviet Relations

During Tevfik Rüşti Aras's foreign ministry, relations between the Soviet Union (USSR) and Turkey were developing. Undoubtedly, with the fall of Tsarist Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 and the establishment of the Soviet Union, Bolshevik's support to the Turkish War of Independence had played a vital part. Especially after 1923, it is seen that Turkish-Soviet relations in the solution of the problems left from Lausanne have developed under the influence of the behavior of Western countries towards the country.

In the Mosul question, the biggest of the disputed issues left behind from Lausanne, the attitude of LN brought Turkey closer to its powerful neighbor USSR. The stance of LN on the Mosul question and the insecure policies of western countries led the two states to sign the "Non-aggression and Neutrality Treaty" on December 17th, 1925. In this pact signed between Foreign Minister Aras and Soviet foreign minister Chicherin, in summary, if one of the signatory parties is attacked, the other signatory country will maintain its neutrality, neither party will attack each other, they will not participate in hostile action against one of the signatory countries with other states, and this treaty, which has been signed for three years, will be extended for one year six months before the end of this period, as long as it is not annulled by one of the parties (Ülman, 1969).

In this period, the Soviet Union considered LN as a tool for aggression against itself by other major countries. Thus, it was against Turkey entering into the LN, just as the Soviet Union did not enter. According to the British, it could protect itself against Italy and Greece, so long as Turkey entered the LN. In addition, Britain made economic sanction decisions and used it as a means of repression in order to move Turkey away from Moscow (Fischer, 1951). Aras went to Odessa in November 1926 to meet Chicherin. It is seen that these meetings focused on three main points. The first is the signing of a trade agreement, the second is the issue of entering LN, and last but most importantly, the ongoing Italian threat over Turkey. Foreign Minister Aras stated that Chicherin had given him a letter to be sent to Atatürk when he left Odessa. In this letter, it is stated that the Soviets would not take any action to jeopardize Turkey's interests in the Balkans. They then officially announced that if Turkey is not given permanent membership in LN, they would not enter the institution (TBMM, 1931).

On March 11th, 1927, the USSR and Turkey have signed a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in Ankara. With this agreement, commercial relations started to develop between the two countries, and commercial representations were made diplomatic (Gürün, 1991). Balance of power policy, which is one of the most defining features of international relations, has been one of the main factors that determine Turkish-Soviet relations. With the signing of another Kellogg-Briand Pact that prohibits war, Turkey

and USSR joined the pact. On April 1st, 1929, Turkey joined the Litvinov protocol, which was signed on February 9th, 1929 to quickly adopt this pact in other Eastern European countries (Uçarol, 1979).

Tevfik Rüşti Aras used the saying "our great neighbor and our friend" only for the USSR. The reason for this was explained by the fact that the first envoy came from Soviet Russia to Ankara to visit The Founding Assembly and to protect the interests and security of the two countries (Aras, 1968).

1929 Depression is one of the deepest economic crises in the history of the world and it has been felt violently almost worldwide, of course, the new Turkey was also relatively affected. After the crisis, Turkey gave up on the liberal economic model it applied and turned towards the statism. In order to implement this, the First Five Year Development Plan was prepared in 1932 with the support of Soviet consultants and it was put into effect in 1934 (Boratav, 1995). In the same year, foreign minister Aras and Prime Minister İsmet İnönü went to Moscow to return the compliment of the Soviet Foreign Minister Chicheron's prior visit, and during this visit, an 8 million dollar loan agreement was signed for industrial goods and machinery imports (Aslan, 1976).

The biggest reason for the development of economic dialogue is the developing dynamics of the Turkish-Soviet political relations during the Atatürk period, the foreign policy priorities of the Soviets as well as Turkey's preferences in economic policy (Özder, 2017).

Although the relations between Turkey and the USSR showed a rising chart since the War of Independence, the Ankara government acted cautiously with its relations with Moscow. The biggest reason for this is Russia's ongoing communist propaganda. While Turkey wanted to strengthen its place in the new world order after the Lausanne Treaty, it closely followed up on communist activities. The Moscow administration, however, dissatisfied with Turkey's prudent approach to communism stated that this is an integral part of the Turkish-Soviet friendship (Armaoğlu, 2015).

Important developments were seen to be experienced in the relations between Turkey and the USSR in the period when the Second World War was approaching. In the speech made by Mussolini at the Fascist Congress in 1934, he stated that Italy's national interests lied in Asia and Africa. With the preparations made by the Italians on the 12 Islands, this threat increased anxiety in Yugoslavia, Albania, and Turkey. Therefore, Turkey wanted to make an aid agreement with Russia and France against Italy in 1935. But France was reluctant to make an agreement in order not to offend Italy (Gürün, 1983).

Upon this, Tevfik Rüşti Aras met with the Russian Ambassador Karahan in Ankara and made it clear to him to sign an agreement to put Italy, Germany, and Poland in foresight in the same way. Turkey's Ambassador to Moscow, Zekai Apaydın, explicitly explained the benefits of a general agreement to Russia, to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, to Krestinski as such: "I do not think that Turkey's effective help against the possibility of an attack by Germany or Poland on the Soviets will be insignificant, besides, you know how much Turkey's holding the Straits would impact various phases that such a war can cause." (Gürün, 1983)

As the world political balances started to change rapidly, it caused Turkey to take new steps on the Straits issue. By Turkey presenting the threat of the Italian leader Mussolini, they successfully organized a conference in Montreux as a result of the successful implementation of the "balance policy". The views of the Turkish-Soviet views on the straits were similar before the conference, but the emergence of new demands by the side Soviets during the conference soured the relations. The conference concluded on July 20th, 1936, with the acceptance of the most requests by the USSR

(Montreux Straits Conferene Minutes Documents, 1976). Although Turkey and the USSR came together to establish a new peace pact after the Montreux Conference, it was not possible for different reasons. Turkey and USSR also attended and signed the Nyon Conference, which was concluded with the agreement signed on September 14th, 1937 for Mediterranean security (Benhur, 2004). On July 31st, 1937, the Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras and Minister of Internal Affairs Şükrü Kaya visited Moscow, when the Turkish-Russian friendship was strengthened by bilateral and multilateral treaties and the two states united on the principle of world peace being indivisible and shared security, a joint statement was signed on July 16th, 1937 (Bilge, 1992).

It is observed that the relations with the USSR were attentive during the ministry of Tevfik Rüşti Aras. In the context of the friendship agreement signed in 1925, he reassured Russia and guaranteed that there would be no policy against the USSR. Undoubtedly, Aras's sympathy for the USSR and the continuation of Turkish-Russian friendship has a great share in the context of his personal diplomacy approach.

Turkey's Entry into the League of Nations

Upon Ataturk's directive, Turkey wished to enter by being invited by the association, and not by applying to LN. With the proposal of the Spanish representative and the support of the Greek representative, a draft resolution foreseeing Turkey's invitation to the Organization was adopted. Upon notification of this invitation to Turkey, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) took an aggregate decision on July 9th, 1932 that accepted the invitation. On the same day, Foreign Minister Aras informed the decision of the TGNA in his letter to the Secretary-General of LN. The text of this letter was as follows (Ülman, 1969):

"In aggregate response to your invitation, I take great honor in declaring that the Republic of Turkey is ready to become a member of the League of Nations and that including the agreements made with non-member states, commitments undertaken by the Republic of Turkey with the agreements signed until today will not bear any inconsistencies with the duty as a member of the League of Nations. I hereby point out that all this agreement, which was signed before the acceptance of Turkey, was signed in the spirit of Paris pact, which the majority of the League of Nations members signed in the same direction. While making this declaration, I would also like to add that Turkey is under a special circumstance due to the military affairs stemming from the contract signed in Lausanne on July 24th, 1923."

Turkey's entry into the LN may be among the most important events during Aras's foreign ministry. The order after the First World War failed to establish "permanent peace" and the seeds of the Second World War began to be sown quickly.¹ Turkey mostly dealt with its own internal problems until this period and was not in any alliance in Europe, busy with some of the problems left from Lausanne.

The founding purpose of the League of Nations was to establish international cooperation and maintain peace permanently after the First World War. The founders were the states that won the war, and the stability of the new international order determined by the Versailles Agreement was aimed as a direct result of the war. Turkey, however, was not included in the LN because it was among the defeated states, but the

¹ From the work titled "Perpetual Peace" written by the famous Political Scientist and philosopher Immanuel Kant in order not to allow another great war in international relations.

states that were defeated in the war started to be accepted due to the changing conditions (Sencer, 2006).

The extraordinary meeting held at the General Assembly of the League of Nations to invite Turkey to become a member of the community took place on July 18th, 1932 under the chairmanship of Belgian Paul Hymans. The positive opinions of the delegates in this meeting about Turkey drew attention. For example, the Greek delegate said: "The new Turkey did not refuse to attend either the disarmament conference or the general disarmament conference, it sincerely showed the desire to work for peace on every step of the way, and thus deserved the honor of being recognized and admitted to the ranks of the nations working together for peace. The Ankara government calmed the centuries-old hatred and animosity between Turkey and Greece, and replaced hostility with hospitality between the two countries, thereby contributing to peace in the Balkans. Until a few years ago, if Turkey and Greece were said to walk hand in hand towards a common goal, this would be interpreted as a dream-like statement even more so than the vision of a Prophet." After the Italian delegate praised the relations between Turkey and Italy, Scialoja stated; "Lack of Turkey's membership in the community was a lack of European political interests, we as Italy look forward to seeing the development and strengthening of the young Mediterranean state born under the light of Atatürk." French Prime Minister Edouard Herriot was at a meeting with the French delegate Paul-Boncour. Boncour stated: "Turkey, which is between Europe and Asia and is a very old country, being accepted into the LN is a symbol of its universality and Turkey's oldest friend is France in Europe." The English delegate Lord Londonderry declared that: "The British government believed that Turkey was an element of peace and stability and that its participation in the league was crucial not only for the importance of the geographical situation but also because of the clever policy it was pursuing under Atatürk's rule" (Akşin, 2019).

Upon this call of the General Assembly, Foreign Minister Aras gave the following response to the Secretary-General (League of Nations, 1932):

"In aggregate response to your invitation, I take great honor in declaring that the Republic of Turkey is ready to become a member of the League of Nations and that including the agreements made with non-member states, debts undertaken by the Republic of Turkey with the agreements signed until today will not be redeemable with the duties as a member of the League of Nations."

It is observed that after 1930, the possibility of membership increased even more, as the conditions desired by Turkey gradually developed. However, hesitations of Turkey about LN were ongoing, albeit partially. Speaking at the budget negotiations held in the Turkish Grand National Assembly on July 15th, 1931, Aras spoke as follows (TBMM, 1931):

"The idea of the League of Nations is one very much liked by the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish revolution. We can say that it is our own opinion. There is also an institution for applying that idea. My talking separately about the idea and the institution is to mark the distance between practice and theology. Otherwise, we act very affectionately and amicably towards this establishment and we participate in everything it attempts to do. We work together at many points, in the same atmosphere, within a neighborhood. Why did we not enter, when the situation was so?"

In the statement he made afterward on why Turkey had not entered LN, Aras went on to say that not every state member of the organization was included in the assembly of the organization, that Turkey was not invited as a permanent member, that there were permanent, semi-permanent and temporary members. In summary, Aras appears to have expressed at every chance he had that Turkey would only become a member of

the organization if it was admitted to LN as permanent members. However, the main point to be considered here is why does Tevfik Rüşti Aras set a permanent membership requirement, even when knew the “big states” would be accepted only as a permanent member of LN? The most reasonable answer to this is that Turkey did not want to enter LN as of 1931. Since Turkey extended the term of the Friendship and Neutrality Agreement on December 17th, 1929, which was signed with the Soviet Union in 1925. This agreement included the term that if one of the parties entered into political agreements concerning their neighbors, the other would need to get their approval (Alantar, 2004).

Mustafa Kemal Pasha believed that Turkey could become a member if it was invited, not by applying to the League of Nations. During the meeting of Spain at the LN General Assembly to discuss the Sino-Japanese conflict on July 6th, 1932, the draft resolution, which envisaged Turkey's invitation to the agency, was adopted. Turkey decided to accept the invitation via the Turkish Grand National Assembly on July 9th, 1932, and notified it to the General Secretariat of LN. LN organized a private session; Turkey was adopted unanimously by the association on July 18th, 1932 (Milliyet, 1932).

Symptoms of Atatürk diplomacy with Turkey's becoming a member of the League of Nations have been as follows (Akşin, 2019):

- 1- Turkey, which had strong ties with Russia, left it to join LN. This is a new proof that Atatürk knew how to act in the way required by national interests, and that Turkey and its foreign policy are completely detached from each other, not being affected by anyone on the path that he calls national policy.
- 2- Our government did not hesitate to withhold from Russia and in a note sent to the Russian embassy in Ankara, Turkey stated the importance it attributed to the Turkish-Soviet friendship and it argued that reservation records put forth by the Turkish Government were noted to be of a quality to satisfy Russia.

Turkey's leadership in the two Regional Integration; Balkan Pact and Sa'dabad Pact

Balkan Pact

The Balkan Pact is one of the most vital integration projects that Atatürk attached importance to between the two wars. Turkey aimed at maintaining relationships based on stability and peace with the Balkan states since the 1930s. The most powerful advocate of the union to be established in the Balkans, Atatürk's statements that were made at a meeting between the Balkans are of great importance: “Let's not forget that the ancestors of the Balkan nations were relatives of each other. These nations have lived together for centuries. We should accept the Balkan Union as a natural result of its historical development.” (Anadolu Agency Bultenin, 1933) Turkey, which adheres to the National Pact Principles, did not demand any land on the Balkan countries outside its borders and acted towards the protection of the status quo agreed in Lausanne.

In this period, which is in the process of the foreign ministry of Tevfik Rüşti Aras, it was observed that Aras agreed with Atatürk about the union planned to occur in the Balkans. The foundations toward great cooperation with the Balkan states were taken through bilateral agreements, and with the Balkan Pact signed in 1934, an important step was taken to ensure permanent peace in the region. The infrastructure of the Balkan

Pact was prepared with Balkan Conferences in Athens, Istanbul, Bucharest, and Thessaloniki with bilateral agreement (Karner & Howard, 1932). It was signed in Athens on February 9th, 1934 by Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Greece (Kelkitli, 2017). Thus, the four signatory states stated their determination to maintain the stability in the Balkans. It can be said that this regional pact was essentially made against Bulgaria, which is seeking revisionist goals, and its supporter Italy.

After the signing of the Balkan Treaty, having made an important speech at the dinner given by the Greek government, Tevfik Rüşti Aras repeated Turkey's principle of "peace at home, peace in the world" and emphasized that as a generation, who had seen war, peace must be maintained under all circumstances. Aras added that the Balkan Pact is an important alliance to serve this purpose and believes that it will fulfill its responsibilities in this way with its signatory states (Vakit, 1934).

The Balkan Pact, which was Europe's first regional security alliance, came to the fore with Atatürk's personal dedication and efforts. However, the failure of LN to implement a common security system across Europe and Britain and France pursuing an unnecessary "soothing" policy against aggressive Germany and Italy caused Balkan states to sympathize with these countries. At the Belgrade Conference held on May 4-6th 1936, the end of the Balkan Pact was beginning to come. The Balkan Pact was disappointing for Belgrade, as securing the Albanian borders was taken out of the scope of the pact, even though Romania and Yugoslavia opposed it with the proposal of Greece and the backing of Turkey (Stavrianos, 1944). In January 1937, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia signed "friendship and eternal peace" and "non-aggression and impartiality" agreements with Italy in March 1937, both of which brought an end to the Balkan Pact. Although Turkey has exerted great effort to keep things afloat, it all came down due to the approach of member countries.

Sa'dabad Pact

Another important regional peace project, established under the leadership of Turkey in the interwar period, is the Sa'dabad Pact. As it is known, Turkey wanted to establish lasting good neighborly relations between the Balkan countries in the West and Iran, Afghanistan, and the Arab states in the east since the late 1920s. In this regard, Tevfik Rüşti Aras, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, initiated a multi-faceted active foreign policy approach to increase Turkey's influence on the Middle East countries (Aras, 1968).

The Italian threat that started in the Eastern Mediterranean after the invasion of Abyssinia began the rapprochement between Turkey and England and directed Turkey to cooperate with the Middle Eastern countries. During this period, the Middle Eastern states, especially Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, were disturbed by the British and USSR influence on the region (Bilgin, 2016). Therefore, Turkey and regional countries have decided to follow a balanced policy in regard to these two imperial powers. Another benefit of this union was that the four regional states would strengthen their hands internationally by solving the problems between themselves, and then forming a regional alliance (Shmuelevitz, 1988). The most important reason for Sa'dabad Pact's main establishment is the solution of bilateral border problems rather than the perception of foreign threats, and the pursuit of cooperation in the context of regional security (Soysal, 1999).

Another important reason for Turkey, Iran, and Iraq being in the pursuit of regional cooperation was the perception of the Kurdish issue as a threat by the three states. This problem was seen as both internal and external problems of the countries. The fact that the number of Kurdish groups was high in these countries was sometimes a problem

due to the Kurdish rebels, who fled from one of the states, taking refuge in another neighboring country. During this period, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq frequently encountered the revolts of Kurdish groups in the process of determining their borders strictly in the nation-building process and in determining their national identity. It is seen that the three important states of the region wanted to get closer to each other for finding the solution to this problem (Palabiyık, 2010). This is one of the reasons that accelerated the establishment of the Sa'dabad Pact.

In this regard, another important manifestation of Atatürk's and Aras's understanding of collective peace and security; in the Sa'dabad Palace in Tehran on July 8th, 1937, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran signed the Sa'dabad Pact (Pavlyuk, 1999). The agreement was signed for five years, accordingly, they have committed that they will not follow policies aggressive to each other, that they will pursue a policy to develop friendly relations between the parties, adhere to LN, respect national borders, and support each other in matters of common interest (Armaoğlu, 2010).

Russia and Britain closely followed the process of forming the Sa'dabad Pact. Turkey's Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras said in a speech he made (Umar, 2010): "This enormous work that came into being with the consent and even help of our friend Soviet Russian, who helped make West Asia into a common brother's homeland and our friend England." This means that Russia and Britain were informed during the process of the pact. The main demand of Turkey was the participation of other Arab states in the pact as well as Iraq. Again, Foreign Minister Aras said in an interview (Akşin, 2019): "The inclusion of neighboring friend Iraq in this pact will be a new bridge between the states that signed the pact and the Arab states." His saying this shows that this formation aims to bring peace and prosperity to the region by spreading across the geography.

Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits

One of the most vital foreign policy issues of Atatürk and foreign minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras was the status issue of the Straits. The Lausanne Straits Convention included in the Lausanne Agreement posed a threat to the security of Turkey. In the process of approaching the Second World War, he wanted the straits to be in full control in terms of Turkey's national security and in the new international order of the war process as well as afterward.

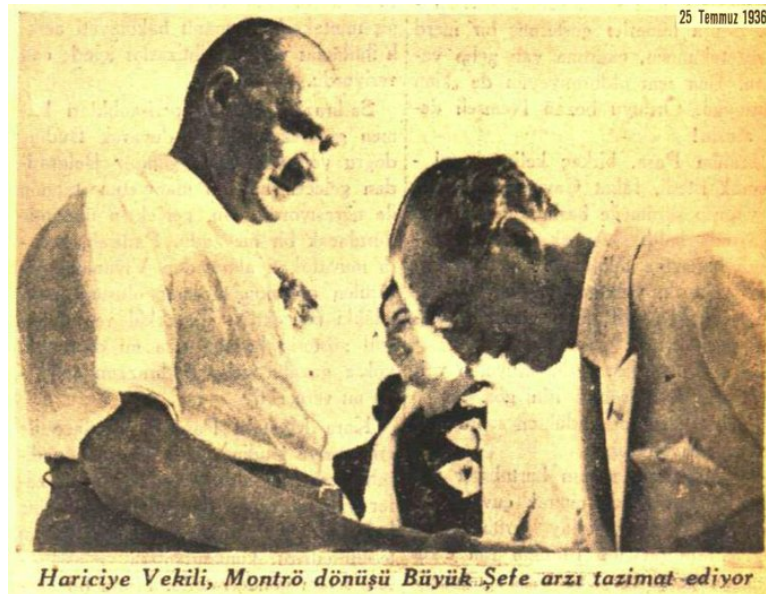
Due to its geostrategic importance, the straits have been an important waterway in history, which the great powers of the era wanted to control. This also appears to have brought about an understanding that increased the geopolitical importance of the straits. The Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey were able to use the strategic importance of the straits in the balance of power worldwide. Therefore, it has managed to influence the regional policies of the great powers (Uzun, 2017).

Against all the different projects and arrangements designed on the management and control of the Straits, the Lausanne Peace Treaty was the last dispute that was set up until the Montreux Convention was signed in 1936. Accordingly, the passage of foreign ships through the straits was arranged according to the principles set by Misak-ı Milli (National Pact). Furthermore, the disarmament of the Straits posed a threat to the security of Turkey. The fact that the straits would be controlled by the international commission and its security would be provided by LN, show it has been an agreement that limits Turkey's sovereignty and contradicts the understanding of independence (Soysal, 1983). As a result, LN could not meet Turkey's security concerns over the Straits Commission. Moreover, the failure of disarmament negotiations in Europe

rendered LN disreputable in the eyes of Turkey. The most concrete example of this is the armament of Italy, Germany, and the USSR as of 1933. Italy started attacking Abyssinia and Japan started attacking Manchuria. On the other hand, Germany entered the Rhine region, which was banned from the deployment of the soldiers by the Versailles Agreement signed at the end of the First World War and LN was unable to prevent this. Efforts of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy to achieve military superiority in the Middle East and the Mediterranean have brought Turkey and England, because of the common threat perception, that were previously in diplomatic wars to each other in Lausanne. On 11 April 1936, Turkey and Britain sent a diplomatic note to the states that are parties to the Lausanne Straits Convention (Caşın, 2017).

At the MC General Assembly held in September 1935, Turkey emphasized that disarmament of the Straits would weaken Turkey, but it could not achieve a concrete result. Later, in various meetings, Turkey managed to create a positive atmosphere in bringing acceptance toward their own interests. Surely, Turkey preferred peace-based diplomatic paths rather than fulfilling the demands of other states with force (Canca, 2012). Turkey has not renounced its determined attitude in this process. By 1936, the possibility of war was clearer, benefiting from these conditions, Turkey sent a diplomatic note to the states that signed the Lausanne Convention on the Straits on April 11th, 1936 and demanded renegotiation of the provisions on the straits (Tekeli & İlkin, 2013). Apart from Italy, Turkey's proposal was received positively by the USSR, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania, France, and the UK, considering the changing international conditions.

In this process, Atatürk was asked a question by an American journalist: "Do you see a big war threat in the near future?" His answer to this question is quite interesting (Anadolu Agency, Bulletin, 1935): "It is not right to talk about the near future. Because now there is the threat of warfare. Today, Europe's situation has worsened compared to a few months ago. Because the overall situation has completely changed since the Treaty of Lausanne of the Straits, Turkey is rightly obliged to request arbitration. "According to Atatürk, if the Straits were not allowed for arbitration, serious security holes and dangers would occur in the south and west of Turkey (Akşin, 1991).



Tevfik Rüstü Aras greet Atatürk for the return of the Montreux agreement
July 25, 1936

The conference Turkey desired convened Montreux, Switzerland on June 22nd, 1936 to discuss these matters. The Montreux Convention was signed on July 20th, 1936 as a result of negotiations for about a month. Following the signature, Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras made a speech and underlined the importance of Turkey's solution of the issues through peaceful means and negotiation, and said that Turkey's stance set a good example to the world and that it was proven by Turkey that it was possible to overcome problems once thought to be difficult (Akşam, 1936). Aras stated in his speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly on July 31st, 1936: "There should be no doubt that we will apply every article of the Montreux Convention without exception for all states, regardless of contracting parties." By declaring this, he laid down the determination of Turkey on the realization of the convention (TBMM, 1936).

Pursuant to the Montreux Convention, Turkish domination over the Turkish straits was established. In addition, one of the important problems left over from the Lausanne conference, the Bosphorus issue was resolved thanks to Tevfik Rüşti Aras working overtime. Thus, Aras added a new one to its successful foreign policy studies and has taken its place in history as one of the architects of the Montreux Convention, which today ensures that the straits, which are of great importance for Turkey's national security and national interests, are under the control of the country.

CONCLUSION

Tevfik Rüşti Aras, who served as the only foreign minister of Atatürk until his death, successfully managed Turkish foreign policy during a period, when the world was rapidly being dragged towards the Second World War, which would result in new and greater destruction. Undoubtedly, the harmony between Aras and Atatürk's understanding of diplomacy is great. Just like Atatürk, Aras also believed that Turkey should lead regional integration projects, and thus, it would be possible to establish regional peace with pacts to be established and then to establish global peace that would not allow for another world war. For this purpose, Turkey aimed to cooperate with multi-dimensional foreign policy via the Balkan Pact with the Balkan countries via the Sa'dabad Pact with the Middle East countries. Of course, the powers who wanted to destroy the Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) map of Turkey have carried out a very strong pressure policy to prevent Turkey from leading such two big pacts and becoming a regional power. Eventually, however, the pacts did not last long and there were no obstacles to World War II. The most important agreement signed by Turkey after Lausanne is without a doubt the Montreux Convention. The Turkish straits, perhaps the most strategic waterways in the world, were not wanted to be left to Turkish domination by the occupying states. However, due to Atatürk's diplomatic mastery and Aras's flawless implementation of his policies, Turkey has successfully implemented its policy of balance of power under pre-war conditions and managed to have the parties sit at the negotiating table again; the straits became a completely independent and sovereign state under Turkish domination. Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras is a Turkish statesman, who has been able to apply soft power, balance policy and diplomacy in the best way possible while adhering to Atatürk's principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" during his term.

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