

**Rutgers History Department**

**and**

**Livingston Honors Program**

**Undergraduate Honors Thesis**

**The Impact of the Korean War on Turkey**

**A study by Ata A. Akiner**

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*Go to; suppose thou sacrifice the child; what prayer wilt thou utter, when 'tis done? What will the blessing be that thou wilt invoke upon thyself as thou art slaying our daughter?*

-Line from *Iphigenia At Aulis* by Euripides

*“It will be [the] greatest crime in Turkish history if we fail to take advantage of this opportunity”*

-Informal memorandum from Maj. Gen. Yusuf A. Egeli to Gen. Nuri Yamut<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950. Volume V. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978. 1282.

## INTRODUCTION

In the early morning hours of May 27, 1960, the rumbling of tanks and sound of gunshots echoing across the capital awakened most citizens of Ankara. Those who possessed radios, upon switching them on to find out what was going on, were greeted by the Turkish National Anthem, followed by the stern voice of Colonel Alparslan Turkes. It would be the first time the Turkish public would hear his voice, with which they would become so familiar in following years; he would have the privilege of making the announcement that would declare the end of one period in Turkish history, and usher in a new one:

The Great Turkish Nation: Starting at 3:00 am on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, the Turkish armed forces have taken over administration throughout the entire country. This operation, thanks to the close cooperation of all our citizens and security forces, has succeeded without loss of life. Until further notice, a curfew has been imposed, exempt only to members of the armed forces.

We request our citizens to facilitate the duty of our armed forces, and assist in reestablishing the nationally desired democratic regime.<sup>2</sup>

In those predawn hours, shadows of tanks rumbling down the wide boulevards of Istanbul and Ankara, accompanied by young military cadets and officers kicking down doors, arresting dazed politicians, and throwing them into trucks while hurling blows and insults at them would mark the beginning of a new, uncertain dawn in Turkish history.

On May 27, 1960, a coup d'état in Turkey overthrew a democratically elected regime in the name of establishing one. It would be regarded widely as being a legitimate action, and celebrated throughout the cities across the nation; however, in the rural areas, where the regime had its power base, the reaction was sullen silence. So how did this situation come to pass? There are the short-term causes, of course; the ruling

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<sup>2</sup> Dilipak, Abdurrahman. Ihtilaller Donemi. Istanbul: Dogan Ofset, 1991. 70.

regime, the Democrat Party (DP), had become increasingly authoritarian throughout the final years of being in power. Overly confident in their majority in Parliament and popularity with the masses, they had suppressed freedom of individual citizens, that of the press, and political entities that opposed them; when they started a full out attack on the opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), the result had been demonstrations against the government, which started out peacefully and grew increasingly violent, with cadets and military officers joining the ranks of the demonstrators, culminating in the military seizing power on May 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>3</sup> This commonly accepted interpretation is often stretched back to the mid-1950s, when the coup conspirators started to meet; however, the long-term causes lie in a little remembered military involvement that had began ten years ago, in a conflict thousands of miles away from Turkey, in Korea.

From 1950 to 1953, Turkey would contribute one annually rotating brigade, altogether totaling up to some 14,936 men at the end of the war, to fight under the United Nations coalition to defend South Korea.<sup>4</sup> Seven more brigades, each deployed and rotated on an annual basis, totaling at over 35,000 more soldiers, would be sent in after the conflict was over, until 1960, although troop contributions in diminishing numbers would continue until 1971.<sup>5</sup> While the events that transpired on the Korean Peninsula might have been physically distant, the impact this troop contribution had on the

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<sup>3</sup> Birand, Mehmet Ali. Demirkirat: Bir Demokrasinin Dogusu. Milliyet Yayinlari, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Kore Harbinde Turk Silahli Kuvvetlerinin Muharebeleri (1950-1953) Ankara: Genelkurmay Basimevi, 1975. 417.

<sup>5</sup> From 1960 to 1966, an annually rotating company force would be contributed, and from 1966 to 1971, when the last Turkish soldiers left, a platoon-sized honor guard was sent annually. Altogether, Turkey would send over 50,000 men to Korea between 1950 and 1971.

Republic of Turkey would mark it as a turning point in the country's history. Turkey's foreign policy, domestic politics, society, economy, and military establishment would be forever altered due to the spark provided by this military involvement; a long chain reaction as a result of this would pave the path to the coup d'état of 27 May 1960, and shape the destiny of the Republic of Turkey up until today.

Looking at what exists regarding Turkey and the Korean War, it can be said with certainty that this topic has been critically examined disappointingly few times, and in those cases, in a not very in-depth basis. The Turkish Brigades remain largely forgotten by history, along with the rest of the Korean War; it seems only appropriate that this conflict is often referred to as the "Forgotten War". Perhaps the best study currently available on this subject is, "Kore Harbinde Turk Tugaylari" (The Turkish Brigades in the Korean War") by Ali Denizli, which gives an excellent account of the military performance of the Turkish Brigades throughout the duration of the Korean War; however, the politics behind the decision are skimmed over and consequences of the contribution are not closely examined, while the impact on Turkey's military establishment is not touched on as well. "Turkey and the Korean War" by Fusun Turkmen and "Forgotten Brigade of the Forgotten War: Turkey's Participation in the Korean War" by John M. Vander Lippe are two of the most recent studies available that examine how Turkey came to contribute troops, and examine this decision's consequences; they are representative of the limited spectrum of academic research conducted regarding this subject. Both accounts, unfortunately, although well argued, at closer examination are not in-depth analyses, and are filled with glaring gaps of information.

Fusun Turkmen's study basically takes the traditionally accepted Turkish point of view of the contribution, and backs up these points with documentary evidence; however, the argument itself is never critically examined. The official Turkish approach for the Korean War, taken up by this study as its guiding principle, goes as such: Turkey, being threatened by the Soviet Union in the post-World War Two environment sought to secure herself by becoming closer to the United States via joining NATO. At this point, the brewing Cold War turned hot with the eruption of the Korean War, and the United Nations issued a resolution stating that member states should come to the aid of South Korea; being a member of the UN, Turkey saw it as her obligation to commit troops, and sent soldiers who fought bravely in a conflict widely supported and understood at home, turning the tide of the war in favor of the UN. As a result, Turkey was allowed into NATO, and the Turkish-American alliance was strengthened. Although the argument put forth by this study, which is based on fortifying the traditional approach, has some valid points, there is much that is overlooked, not to mention domestic political, social, and economic consequences for Turkey are not touched on at all. In addition, it appears to be the case that NATO and a string of Turkish-American alliance provisions were not the only foreign policy consequences for Turkey due to Korea, as shall be examined.

John M. Vander Lippe's study examines the reasons why Turkey participated in the Korean War, the immediate impact this had on Turkish foreign and domestic policy, and long-term impacts on Turkish society. Although probably the most thorough and unbiased account regarding Turkey's involvement in Korea that is available, the foreign policy, domestic, military establishment, and economic impacts discussed by this study are all too brief and at times ambiguous. Pre-1950 Turkish-US relations are

underemphasized, which as shall be examined, was a major factor in paving Turkey's path to Korea. While the impacts the Korean War had on Turkey that he lists are dead on, they are limited in scope, and he does not expand on the results that he brings up. The impacts are more or less summed up in a paragraph, as a list without much explanation or depth; indeed, this list in itself is by no means even close to being complete, as shall be demonstrated. Interestingly, both of these studies also assume wrongly that only one non-rotating brigade of 4,500 men was sent by Turkey, which sadly appears to be a wide-spread misunderstanding observed in most other studies and accounts as well. The numbers of soldiers concerned and the sheer duration of this involvement in itself, involving over 50,000 men and a military presence in Korea for 21 years, are significant and must be examined when analyzing the impact. Most studies of Turkey's involvement in Korea are surprisingly recent<sup>6</sup>, but none of these other examinations are concerned with the issue to be brought up in this paper; that is, the Korean War's impact on Turkey.

During World War Two, the Republic of Turkey remained neutral until February 23, 1945; for six years, she had resisted strong pressure from both the Allied and Axis powers to join the war on either side, and remained one of the few countries in the region to remain intact, undestroyed by a war that had devastated most countries in the

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<sup>6</sup> Other studies are as follows: "Turkiye'nin NATO uyeligini hizlandiran Iki Onemli Faktor: Kore Savasi ve ABD Buyukelcisi George McGhee" ("Two Important Factors that hastened Turkey's admission to NATO: the Korean War and US Ambassador George McGhee") by Dr. Huseyin Bagci, "The Legend of 'The Turk' in Korea: Popular Perceptions of the Korean War and Their Importance to a Turkish National Identity," by Gavin D. Brockett, "Perceptions of China in the Turkish Korean War Narratives" by Cagdas Ungor, "Kore Savasi'nda Turk Esirleri" ("Turkish POWs in the Korean War") by Murat Ozaylar, "Kore Savasi'nda Turk Ordusu" ("The Turkish Army in the Korean War") by Ahmet Elmas, and "Kore Savasi ve Turk Kamuoyu" ("The Korean War and the Turkish Public" by Serkan Sipahi.

neighborhood. Ismet Inonu, head of the Turkish government, had played his cards right; although his decision for neutrality was not appreciated at the time by neither his fellow countrymen, nor the victorious Allies, he had saved his country from certain destruction and demonstrated to the world his capacity as a master diplomat. He had followed the path for foreign policy set down by the country's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, based on the principle, "peace at home, peace in the world". Yet how is it that five years later, Turkish troops would get deployed to a conflict thousands of miles away from Turkey itself, to a land most Turks had never heard of before? Chapter One shall examine this question, looking at the relevant changes between 1923 to 1950 that would create a framework making such a contribution possible; indeed a path would be paved that would make such an action not only a desirable "opportunity" to take advantage of, but a reaction to threat and fear to the world situation. Changes in the international arena that would impact Turkey, namely the emergence of the Cold War, and domestic changes within Turkey itself would occur in this time frame; tremendous political transformation that would change Turkey forever.

With the framework present, Chapter Two picks up where the previous chapter leaves off, at June 25, 1950, when the North Korean armed forces launched an invasion across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into South Korea. Pulling back from Turkey, the international significance of this event, in context of the historical status quo shall be briefly examined, followed by the reaction the United Nations. This shall bring us back to Turkey, and the government's reaction and compliance to the UN request for assistance, which must be examined in the context of relations with the United States. The decision to send 4,500 men shall be examined, along with the international and domestic reactions to this



verdict. As shall be observed, the declaration to send troops in itself from the outset would set a historic precedent. For the first time in the history of the Republic, troops were being deployed outside the national borders of the country; and this was being done by executive order, without approval from Parliament, and thus, unconstitutionally. The impact of how this matter was diplomatically and politically conducted turns out to be very interesting.

Chapter Three shifts our focus to the Turkish soldiers shipped to Korea. Utilizing interviews held with veterans of the Turkish Brigades, the stories of these courageous men shall be intertwined with the political changes and decisions impacting their lives. In addition, the experiences of these soldiers in Korea shall be examined; as it turns out, they would go beyond simply learning new military techniques and how to use American weapons. Their interaction with American soldiers would broaden their horizons, alter the way they would look at things, and fill them with new ideas and concepts, which would both enlighten them, yet also at times prove to be degrading. The results of this interaction would have powerful consequences, as shall be observed.

Chapter Four returns us back to Turkey, where the impact of the Korean War shall be discussed, in the context of domestic politics, society, economics, foreign policy, and the military establishment. The immediate results are an expedited ticket into NATO and more foreign aid and investment from the United States, resulting in an economic boom and rise in living standards; however, this would turn out to be short-lived. Long-term devastating consequences on the economy would occur, which shall be discussed. Authoritarian strains would emerge within the Turkish government as a result of the war, which would initially direct its energy against suppressing anti-war movements; labeling

such groups as “communist”, a dangerous precedent would be set that would be fully unleashed once the Democrat Party felt governmental control was starting to slip from its hands. In the meantime, religion would be utilized as a tool against communism, initially coming up as propaganda for the Korean War. This would legitimize previously suppressed Islamist trends to emerge, leaving secularists, including the military establishment, aghast. The contribution to Korea would also set an important precedent for Turkish foreign policy; for the first time in the Republic’s history, it had been considered acceptable to utilize the armed forces for what usually would have been a job for diplomats and politicians. Most importantly, how all these strains came together to cause the military to emerge as the only credible institution within Turkey, why large portions of the population and the military would turn against the government, and how a new civilian-military alliance was forged that would culminate in the events of 27 May 1960 shall be examined. As I shall argue, throughout the course of the 1950s, the junior officers in the military would not only become a lot more radicalized as a result of the atmosphere created by the war, but added to the domestic political environment as a result of the Korean War would lead to an environment that made the 1960 coup inevitable. This would lay down the path for the reintroduction of the Turkish military to politics for the first time since the foundation of the Republic; a check within the political structure that has remained until today. Most concretely, a junior officer who would be directly impacted by his experiences in Korea as a result of his experiences with American soldiers would be Kenan Evren, who would later to seize power through a coup d’etat in 1980 and become President of the Republic of Turkey.

Finally, in the Epilogue the significance of the coup d'état of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May in Turkish history as another turning point shall be discussed. The lasting impact the deployment of the Turkish Brigades in Korea up until today as a turning point will be briefly described, in light of the status quo in Turkey. This includes the military assuming a role in Turkish politics that it would never dislodge from, and Turkey's military involvements as a result of this precedent, from Cyprus to Iraq. I shall also concisely trace the consequences of the alliance between the United States and Turkey, which has remained intact throughout the Cold War, up to today. In addition, the war's impact on the veterans of this war, who have sacrificed so much and deserve so much more than they have received, shall be discussed. To conclude, the fact that this war has brought South Korea and Turkey closer to each other shall be addressed as well.

My primary sources are interviews with Turkish Korean War veterans, volumes of the Foreign Relations series, and Turkish newspapers from the time period. As for secondary sources, for background on Turkey's politics, economy, military establishment, and foreign policy I shall be especially utilizing Dr. William Hale's three excellent volumes that address these subjects: The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey, Turkish Politics and the Military, and Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000. For a more detailed account of the domestic Turkish politics between 1950 and 1960, I am referring to The Turkish Experiment in Democracy by Feroz Ahmad, and Demirkirat by Mehmet Ali Birand. As for general events going on within this time frame, my source is Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi ("Republic Encyclopedia"), published by Yapi Kredi Publications. I shall be utilizing other books, sources, and documents as well, which I accessed through the Rutgers University, Princeton University, The Korean War

Study Center, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Istanbul University Library, Beyazit State Library, the Library of the Grand National Assembly of the Republic of Turkey, and the Library of the Military History and Strategic Studies Archive (ATASE).

Turkey's involvement in the Korean War marks the end of an era, and ends with a new beginning; the coup d'état of 27 May 1960. Indeed, by itself, the contribution of soldiers to Korea by itself did not cause all of the impacts to Turkey that shall be discussed; however, it provided the spark that started an unstoppable chain reaction that would take on a life of its own, resulting in dramatic changes for the Republic of Turkey. In the following pages, I hope to demonstrate that perhaps the unintended political, social, and economic consequences of the forgotten Turkish brigades of the "Forgotten War" had a deeper impact on the Republic of Turkey than currently accepted, and that its after-effects are still with us today, and more relevant than ever; not only for Turkey, but the United States as well.

## CHAPTER 1

### A New Beginning

*You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.*

-Leon Trotsky<sup>7</sup>

14 May 1950 is considered a turning point in the history of the Republic of Turkey. The Republican People's Party (RPP), founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and now under the leadership of İsmet İnönü, was removed from power. Being the political institution that had controlled the country since its foundation in 1923, the RPP was reduced neither by protests and street fighting, nor by military intervention and civil war;

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<sup>7</sup> Walzer, Michael. Just and Unjust Wars. 2000

instead, Ismet Inonu had allowed the masses to empower themselves peacefully with the weapon of democracy, the ballot box. On that day, the first truly democratic elections were held in Turkey; when the smoke cleared, with a turnout rate of almost 90%, the Democrat Party (DP), founded only four years ago under the leadership of dissident RPP members, won a stunning victory, receiving 53% of the votes, while the RPP barely received 40%; however, what made this victory so crushing was that due to the voting system at the time, the DP's victory converted into 408 seats in Parliament compared to the RPP's 69, a truly devastating blow.<sup>8</sup>

On 29 May 1950, the newly installed Prime Minister Adnan Menderes addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In his opening remarks he noted,

In many respects, the Ninth Grand National Assembly will have in our history a unique place. It is for the first time in our history that, as a result of a full and free expression of the national will, this distinguished Assembly has come to a position where it can shape the nation's destiny. We shall remember that history day [14 May 1950] as the day of victory not only for our party but for Turkish democracy.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the elections of 14 May 1950 marked the beginning of a new dawn in the history of the Republic of Turkey. Such was the significance of this event that it would be widely remembered as the "White Revolution"<sup>10</sup>. The people had voted out the "military-bureaucratic elite", which had been the main power base of the Republican People's Party for 27 years, bringing into power a very different kind of politician.<sup>11</sup> Those who had been in opposition to the ruling party were now in control; indeed, the situation is

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<sup>8</sup> Howard, Douglas A. The History of Turkey. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. 119.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 35.

<sup>10</sup> Ersel, H., et al. Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi: 1923-2000. Vol. 2. Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, 2003. 164-165

<sup>11</sup> Onis, Ziya. "The State and Economic Development in Contemporary Turkey: Etatism to Neoliberalism and Beyond." *Turkey Between East and West*. Ed. Vojtech Mastny and R. Craig Nation. Boulder, CO: Westview P, 1996. 155-178.

best summarized by Mehmet Ali Birand: “Gün, üniformasızların, kravatsızların, ünvansızların günüydü”<sup>12</sup>.

14 May 1950 represented a break from the past; it would mark the beginning of an era that would come to a close with events that took place on another world-shattering May morning ten years later, which radically transformed the Republic of Turkey. The decision made two months into the Democrat Party’s rise to power to send troops to Korea without Parliamentary approval would serve as a catalyst leading up to its eventual downfall; however, to comprehend exactly why the Democrats, under Adnan Menderes’s leadership, made this decision to send troops, and subsequently how the country would be transformed in these ten years, firstly the status quo in 1950 must be fully understood. We must start with the historical context and framework that made such a contribution possible and so significant. In order to appreciate the changes that took place due to the Korean War, the system being changed must be recognized first.

### **Domestic Politics**

Developments within the time frame of 1923 to 1950 signified a break from the past. It must be remembered that the Republic of Turkey was established from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire; forged through the crucible of the War of Independence that followed defeat in the First World War. The country inherited was a ruined one; the land and population were scarred by years of war, and had suffered from years of mismanagement. The infrastructure throughout the country, already limited and outdated, had been largely destroyed by the war. A heavy foreign debt was inherited, and the economy was severely underdeveloped and dependent on foreigners; an industrial

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<sup>12</sup> “The day belonged to those without uniforms, neckties, or titles”. Birand, Mehmet Ali. Demirkirat: Bir Demokrasinin Dogusu. Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1991. 52.

base was almost non-existent. The imperial domains had finally been completely lost, ceded to the Allies after World War I; what had remained that would become the Republic was a demoralized rump of the former empire.<sup>13</sup>

The political apparatus had been dependent on foreign interests that controlled its actions for the last years of the empire. This situation must be kept in mind when studying the governmental policies pursued by the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his successor İsmet İnönü, which would be in reaction to these immediate concerns. Revolutionary changes within Turkey's foreign policy, government, economy, society, and military establishment would be the physical manifestation of this response; the goal would be to consolidate this new revolutionary order, with the ultimate goal being to establish and preserve independence and national sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> This fundamental principle must be kept in mind when analyzing the transition in policies that would take place post-1950, especially when analyzing the reasons behind the deployment to Korea, and the significance of this war in significantly altering this principle. To say the least, those who came to power in 1950 would pursue a much different understanding of "sovereignty".

The order established in 1923 was a closed, single-party system, created as the result of a "tacit alliance between the urban middle class and the intelligentsia, army officials and state officials, and the landowners and notables of Anatolia."<sup>15</sup> While the leadership of this party has been described as a "military-bureaucratic elite", and

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<sup>13</sup> Aksin, Sina. Turkey: From Empire to Revolutionary Republic. New York: New York University Press, 2007. 221.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 57.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad 1-2.

certainly the leadership of the RPP had a rather large proportion of retired military officials, it would be wrong to say that the military was the sole social grouping represented by the party. Indeed, it appears all these groups came together through the national struggle of the early 1920s, as a means of holding the nation together against disintegration, and would stay together until 1946, under the banner of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*). At that point, due to domestic and international considerations, Inonu would voluntarily choose to peacefully move towards a democratic regime; however, before 1946 two attempts would be made, with Ataturk's approval, to establish opposition parties. Even though each entity would not last for a year, the principles put down, at least theoretically, they were meant to bring about an eventual democratic transition, which would come about peacefully and voluntarily between 1946 and 1950.<sup>16</sup>

Until then, the People's Republican Party would be the sole political voice of the nation, of which Ataturk was founder and undisputed leader until his death in 1938. Indeed, even though independent candidates were allowed starting in the mid-1930s, essentially the party would become the nation. As put by Mustafa Kemal in a speech on February 7 1923, "the People's Party does not represent a portion of the people, but rather the whole nation... the party shall be a school for our people, educating them on modern political culture."<sup>17</sup> This certainly made them very unpopular with certain sectors of society, due to the reformist and intrusive attitudes they had; however, overall Ataturk and Inonu, "placed emphasis on the long-term interest of the country at the expense of the short-term interests of social groups and individuals, and consequently, on

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid 3.

<sup>17</sup> Mango, Andrew. Ataturk. New York: The Overlook Press, 2002.



ideas at the expense of (particularistic) interests”<sup>18</sup>. The Democrats, it should be noted, tended to have the exact opposite approach, with the main emphasis being staying in power by getting popular support via votes, for better or for worse; this would explain their decision to go to Korea as well, as shall be observed.

Under the Republican People’s Party’s banner, the six principles of Kemalism would emerge; first, being adopted into the party constitution, they would be incorporated into the constitution on 5 February 1937. In practice, however, they would already be part of the government’s actions at that point. These principles, the so-called “six arrows”, meant: “The Turkish state is Republican, Nationalist, Populist, Etatist, Secularist, and Revolutionary.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the state would take upon itself the burden of attempting to fundamentally transform Turkey from an empire to a revolutionary republic; according to their approach, in order to survive and preserve her integrity, everything from Turkey’s economy and political system, to her foreign policy and society needed fundamental alterations. The 1950 elections would serve to be the culmination of this revolution.

### **Society**

Turkish society experienced enormous transformation between 1923 and 1950. Ataturk and the Republican People’s Party believed that the only way to secure national sovereignty was Westernization, not only institutionally, but also by fundamentally changing the character of the Turkish people. With the country stabilized and the political apparatus unchallenged, Ataturk was allowed to transform the country: “With a few strokes of his pen, this conservative and religious country, which was 80 per cent

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<sup>18</sup> Heper 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad 4.

rural [...] was ordered to become a modern Western state.”<sup>20</sup> After abolishing the caliphate and declaring the country a secular republic in 1923, he declared illegal the fez and attire that was associated with the old regime, replacing it with Western-style clothing in 1925; however, the transformation would not only remain physical. The Islamic law was replaced with the Swiss civil code and Mussolini’s penal code in 1926. The Latin alphabet replaced the previously utilized Arabic script for Turkish in 1928. Everybody was forced to adopt an official surname in 1934; Mustafa Kemal adopted the last name “Ataturk”, meaning “the father of the Turks” at this point. Women would also be given equal rights as men in 1926, and the entire educational system was opened up to both sexes. This progress especially becomes apparent by the 1935 elections, when eighteen women would be elected to parliament, one year after women had been enfranchised and given the right to be elected; by this point, Turkey had women in almost every professional field, from lawyers and judges, to doctors and airplane pilots.<sup>21</sup> Under the Democrats, bowing to popular pressure, the Democrats would allow these “gains” to be eroded.

On the other hand, the peasantry, which composed the vast majority of the population, was not necessarily overly enthusiastic about being told what to do, finding these new laws and ways of life condescending and intrusive.<sup>22</sup> In 1932, “People’s Homes” would be established in urban areas, in order to instill within the population Kemalism and Westernization, from giving an education to providing sports facilities. In addition to this, starting in 1940 and lasting though 1950 when the Democrats would shut

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<sup>20</sup> Pope, Nicole, et al. Turkey Unveiled. New York: The Overlook Press, 1998 62.

<sup>21</sup> Aksin 220.

<sup>22</sup> Pope, Nicole, et al. 65-66.

them down, “Village Institutes” were established, which were meant to educate the general rural population (the People’s Homes would be shut down a year later, in 1951). Village Institutes meant to not only increase the appallingly low literacy rates, but also other aspects of modernity, such as new methods in agriculture and technical training, and methods of thinking.<sup>23</sup> This would have a permanent impact on Turkey, by bringing the roots of Westernization to the whole country; however, at the same time the centralized government’s hand into thousands of villages across the country would also incense many. In 1950, this would manifest itself with the rural population overwhelmingly supporting the Democrat Party. In the meantime, the reaction against the social change at times got violent. The Turkish army was given its first martyr for the social revolution on December 23, 1930:

Reserve officer Mustafa Fehmi Kubilay, who was shot and decapitated by the ringleaders of a reactionary religious demonstration in the small town of Menemen [...] became the honored martyr of Atatürkism – a symbol for the young officers that they should be prepared to lay down their lives for the revolution.<sup>24</sup>

This social revolution was strongly supported by the military, which historically had viewed itself as the vanguard of modernity in Turkey; indeed, although subordinated to civilian government in 1923, the military would never really stop viewing itself in this role, which would play a crucial role in the events leading up to 1960.

### **Military Establishment**

The Republican People’s Party was mainly composed of bureaucrats with previous military background<sup>25</sup>. Unlike previously, however, according to a law passed on December 19, 1923, individuals were no longer allowed to both serve in the army and

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<sup>23</sup> Aksin 239-241.

<sup>24</sup> Hale, Turkish Politics and the Military 81.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad 7.

engage in politics; during the late Ottoman Empire this had constantly caused problems, with active army officers virtually ending up controlling the Ottoman Parliament.

Indeed, in 1913, Kaiser Wilhelm II had advised the German military mission in the Ottoman Empire to, “drive politics out of the corps of Turkish officers. Its greatest defect is its political activity”<sup>26</sup>. It is unquestionable that within the last years of the empire, the military establishment, viewing itself as the vanguard of change and modernity of the country, had established itself within the political arena. The ruling elite itself that had dragged the Ottoman Empire into the First World War had not been the royal family; a military dictatorship, established in 1913 under the “Three Pashas”, would ultimately bear responsibility for this action. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk himself had been a military commander; undeniably, his popularity that had allowed him to be established as president was a result of his successes on the battlefield.

It was clear that if Turkey were ever to become a truly modern, democratic nation, the military would have to be subordinated to civilian government. Indeed, Ataturk seems to have wanted a military that would be loyal not to abstract principles, but rather him and the Republic:<sup>27</sup>

Commanders, while thinking of and carrying out duties and requirements of the army, must take care not to let political considerations influence their judgment. They must not forget that there are other officials whose duty is to think of the political aspects. A soldiers’ duty cannot be performed with talk and politicking.<sup>28</sup>

There is no doubt that this shift in policy concerned and angered some military commanders; they were quickly short-circuited, either by posting them to remote army

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<sup>26</sup> Hale, Turkish Politics and the Military. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Harris, George S. “The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics”. Middle East Journal. Vol. 19. Part 1. 1965. 56.

<sup>28</sup> Hale, Turkish Politics and the Military. 76.

posts, far away from the political center, or purging them when necessary. Either way, as William Hale argues, his “domination rested on the knowledge that, whatever the complaints of some senior commanders, the vast majority of ordinary soldiers and middle-ranking officers were almost certain to support him.”<sup>29</sup> By firmly subordinating the armed forces to the civilian political apparatus, a major step was taken: “Under the Young Turks, constant army interventions had reduced the empire to ruin; under the new republic, Turkey achieved a degree of political stability which it had not known for decades.”<sup>30</sup>

The role of the armed forces was defined in 1935, by Article 34 of the Army Internal Service Law: “The duty of the armed forces is to protect the Turkish homeland and the Turkish Republic, as determined in the Constitution’.”<sup>31</sup> As Hale argues, the interpretation of this clause as meaning that “the armed forces were obliged to intervene in the political sphere if the survival of the state would otherwise be left in grave jeopardy”<sup>32</sup>, would result in the May 27, 1960. Accordingly, this also would be a result of the manner in which young Turkish officers were trained during this time period as well. While arguing on one side that military commanders should stay depoliticized, Atatürk also at times urged the armed forces to be the vanguard of the revolution:

In our history, an outstanding exception appears. You know that whenever the Turkish nation has wanted to stride towards the heights it has always seen its army, which is composed of its own heroic sons, as the permanent vanguard in campaigns to bring lofty national ideas to reality... In times to come, also, its heroic soldier sons will march in the vanguard for the attainment of the sublime ideals of the Turkish nation.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid 77.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 76.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 80.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 80.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 81.

In addition to this, military education would indoctrinate a radical reformist consciousness among the new generation of military officers. As Hale argues, this would have serious long-term effects, namely, the coup d'état to follow in 1960 and the military intervention in Turkish politics since then. Indeed, such training would certainly have an impact on the self-perception of the armed forces; as Orhan Erkanli, an officer and later politician, would write in his memoirs published in 1973,

The manner in which officers of the Turkish armed forces are trained is not similar to that in other countries. Being a military officer in other countries is simply another professional job; it is the same as being a civil servant. For us, however, it is much more than just a job; it is a sacred, national duty. It being the guardian of the Republic.<sup>34</sup>

As such, although perhaps this was not the intention, the seeds for May 27, 1960 were sown during this period. The result of this intervention, as shall be observed, was a return to the pre-1924 conditions of politicized military establishment, which has remained the situation up until today. The right conditions and a catalyst would be needed first, however, in order to lead up to this point, as shall be discussed.

Interestingly enough, throughout this time period, even though the Turkish armed forces were being indoctrinated accordingly, it was far from being the vanguard of the Republic. The hierarchy was rigid, with little room for upward mobility, the pay was low, and modernization of the military was overall neglected. Pay was incredibly low for soldiers, hovering around \$0.22 per month for conscripts serving their three year long compulsory service, even after the end of the Second World War.<sup>35</sup> As Hale notes, “For most of the interwar period, the government had deliberately sacrificed guns for butter, by concentrating its resources on developing the civilian economy, most notably through

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<sup>34</sup> Erkanli, Orhan. Anılar, Sorunlar, Sorumlular. Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1973. 375.

<sup>35</sup> “Soldiers – The World Over”. Army Information Digest, May 1948. 14-18.

the first five-year industrialization plan launched in 1934.”<sup>36</sup> It appears that the reason for this was that due to the economic and foreign policies Turkey would pursue. While resources were needed for the ambitious economic programs that were meant to develop the country and ensure self-reliance, this would have been impossible without Turkey’s new foreign policy that enabled her to stay neutral and on friendly terms with all her neighbors and great powers. Thus, a militarized society was unnecessary, and indeed undesirable, due to its political, social, and economic ramifications.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, however, changed this completely: “At that time, the Turkish army at peacetime strength consisted of 174,000 soldiers and 20,000 officers. It was ill-equipped with mostly World War I era weapons”<sup>37</sup>. Observing their neighbors being blotted off the maps one by one, the entire energy of the nation went towards defense, not wanting to share their fate. Resisting strong pressure by both the Allies and Axis to stay out of the war, Ismet Inonu, who would virtually single-handedly guide the nation’s foreign policy at this time, would play the old diplomatic game of buying time while building up the country’s strength to face off a potential crisis.<sup>38</sup> By 1941, the army’s size would reach 1.3 million men; considering the total population of Turkey was fewer than 20 million at the time, the social, economic impact was by all means devastating.

At the end of the war, faced with a new menace, the Soviet Union, the Republic of Turkey was unable to demobilize her forces; as Soviet threats mounted, demobilization became even less unlikely. This would be the driving force behind Turkey seeking

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<sup>36</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy, 65.

<sup>37</sup> Howard 111.

<sup>38</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy. 79-108.

international assistance, first from the United Kingdom, and when it turned out that they were not exactly in the position to be helping anyone, from the United States. In a conversation with US officials on 1 February 1950, Turkish Foreign Minister Necmeddin Sadak asked for American assistance, stating that,

Turkey because of her proximity to the Soviet danger had to bear an extremely heavy burden of military expenditures. [...] this expenditure amounted to over half of the national budget. Because this situation had been going on for eleven years, Turkey had been unable to finance investment projects.<sup>39</sup>

This by no means was an exaggeration; between 1939 and 1950, around 40 to 50 percent of Turkey's national budget went towards defense.<sup>40</sup> Although 1950 by no means was the beginning of this relationship, which would begin at the end of World War Two, this statement reflects the prolonged nature of heightened military tension that existed prior to the deployment in Korea and necessity to seek an alliance with the West. Indeed, instead of demobilization, the Turkish armed forces would be forced into an active role, which would last throughout the Cold War and up until today. The significance of the Korean War in shaping this character shall be explored in following chapters.

It is also appropriate to mention here that during the transition to democracy and the elections of 1950, although the Turkish armed forces would at the end remain neutral, by no means were they inactive. A close call came on the night of 14 May 1950, when a high-ranking general phoned Ismet Inonu formally informing him that, "If His Excellency the President gives the green light, under the cover of the communists having rigged the elections we are ready to intervene under the orders of the National Chief." The President responded by saying that, "However the national will has been expressed, I

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<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950. Volume 5. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978.

<sup>40</sup> Hale, The Economic and Political Development of Turkey.



would like to remind all state officials once again that this decision must be respected”<sup>41</sup>.

A military reaction at this stage would certainly have been contradictory to all progress Inonu had made over the past four years; indeed, it could have very well ended in bloodshed, considering the Democrat Party had its supporters within the military as well. Most well known is a group of officers headed by General Fahri Belen and Colonel Seyfi Kurtbek, who after the rigged elections of 1946 vowed to ensure the upcoming elections would be fair. Having let the Democrats know their intentions in advance, their standing was helped enormously once the party came to power. Soon after the elections both men quit the army; Belen was awarded with appointment as Minister of Public Works, while Kurtbek became minister of Transport.<sup>42</sup>

While for the time being the soldiers returned to the barracks, the Democrats would be wary of the armed forces from the beginning, starting their tenure with a purge of this institution, reciprocating these feelings in kind among the military, especially among the younger officers. The outbreak of the Korean War would put these feelings on hold for a while; however, ultimately the involvement in this conflict simply exacerbated these existing negative feelings, and combined with domestic political problems, ultimately paved the way for 27 May 1960. In 1950, however, the military for the time being was subordinated to the civilian government, while “it must be said that after 1945 and at least until 1955 almost all groups (intelligentsia, workers, businessmen, and even the military) supported them enthusiastically”<sup>43</sup>.

### **Economy**

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<sup>41</sup> Birand 67.

<sup>42</sup> Hale, Turkish Politics and the Military. 92.

<sup>43</sup> Ahmad 16.

Undeniably, from the economic aspect it appears that it was quite necessary to sacrifice guns for butter. With Turkish national sovereignty in place, the priority became to establish a country as independent as possible from foreign influence. Having observed how the Ottoman Empire had been helpless against foreign interferences within their government's affairs, the economy's dependence, if not control, by foreigners was viewed as the bridgehead to political domination.<sup>44</sup> The economic priority was therefore to create a strong national economy that would be self-sustaining, with a modern agricultural sector and industrial base, thus ending foreign domination, and ensuring it would never return. The goals initially set in the 1920s should seem fairly lofty to a modern audience with any prior background in Turkey's economy; keeping in mind Turkey's position at the time, they certainly must have appeared completely outrageous back then.

The fledgling nation from the outset had racked up huge amounts of foreign debt, totaling £78 million sterling<sup>45</sup>. The country lacked a modern transportation and communication network, most of which had been destroyed in the war. Self-sustenance was a major issue that needed to be addressed. The economy depended on agriculture, which remained largely primitive. Most of the population remained rural; by 1935, Turkey would still have an urban population of only 17 percent<sup>46</sup>. The country was heavily dependant on foreign imports due to the lack of an industrial base; most industry had been geared towards war production, which still had been woefully inadequate. This, along with the transportation problem, had become very apparent during the First World

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<sup>44</sup> Aksin, 222-225

<sup>45</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy. 55.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.hpntech.com/popart/fs1.aspx>

War. Even basic necessities such as processed sugar had to be imported, even though Turkey produced the raw material, sugar beets, needed to manufacture this commodity. Hence, even though the goal between 1923 and 1950 became “Westernization, recovery, infrastructure, industrialization, and tax reform,” self-sustenance in order to preserve independence and national sovereignty was the ultimate goal.<sup>47</sup>

To start off, banks that would cater to the private sector were established, and foreign investments were nationalized at every opportunity, especially enterprises providing public services. To deal with the infrastructure problem, Turkey would concentrate her efforts on building railroads across the country; by 1939, 3,000 km of new railway lines would be added. It should be noted that in all economic developments, defense was a factor kept in mind. For example, railroads had been chosen over motorways not only because Turkey was self-sustaining for coal, and would have to rely on importing oil otherwise, but also “if Anatolia were to be invaded inhibiting enemy progress would be more easily achieved by damaging railways rather than motorways”<sup>48</sup>. In addition, the location of industrial bases would no longer depend on populated areas or proximity to raw materials, but rather on its defensibility; for example, the iron and steel manufacturing facilities established in Karabuk, a location easy to defend, but in the middle of nowhere, far from resources and manpower, is the perfect example.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps this also reflects the nature of those who were leading the country at the time; namely, a party whose membership included a large proportion of ex-military officers, whose priorities were echoed in this development.

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<sup>47</sup>Ululu, Utku. "The Turkish Economy: Past and Present." Turkey Since 1970. Ed. Debbie Lovatt. Chippenham, UK: Palgrave, 2001. 1-40.

<sup>48</sup> Aksin 223.

<sup>49</sup> Hale, Turkish Politics and the Military. 80.

In addition, it is crucial to understand that it was a priority of Turkey in this time period to pay off all of its foreign debt, and not to incur any new debt if possible; therefore, deficit spending was not resorted to, and borrowing new foreign credit was kept to a minimum<sup>50</sup>. Domestic capital was relied on; inflation, and all of its negative ramifications, was non-existent. Consequently, “by the end of [1946], she had built up her gold and foreign exchange reserves to around \$262 million.” On the other hand, especially due to spending incurred for defense during the Second World War, Turkey’s overall foreign debt increased to \$439 million by December 1945.<sup>51</sup> Even though between 1945 and 1950 Turkey would begin receiving military and economic aid from the United States, the amount of debt Turkey was in would from this point onwards grow exponentially. The Democrats would choose to follow a completely different path from the previous regime. Although they certainly had in mind the best interests of the country, their experiment of relying on foreign aid, borrowing heavily in foreign loans, and depleting the gold reserves for development projects would not turn out very well, and have the effect of making Turkey more, rather than less, reliant on outside.

Turkey’s desire for economic self-sufficiency would culminate in a planned economy; etatism would become the guiding principle, later deemed to be one of the six Kemalist principles. Approved in 1933, the first Soviet-inspired – and funded – five-year industrialization plan would go into action in 1934. The results were spectacular; textile, synthetic silk, glass, leather, paper, iron and steel, sugar processing, and airplane factories would be established across the nation. The mining sector was financed and developed.

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<sup>50</sup> Aksin 223.

<sup>51</sup> Hale, William. The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981. 74.

Overall, the growth rate of Turkish industry averaged 11.6 percent between 1930 and 1939, a rate that has since not been surpassed up until today.<sup>52</sup> Still, with profits mainly going back to the government for reinvestment, the general population did not see much drastic change in living standards. The outbreak of the Second World War, on the other hand, had a devastating impact on the economy. Heavy war taxation needed to raise funds for new weapons would badly hurt the economy, and harsh, authoritarian measures would be implemented.

The post-Second World War environment was not very conducive for the economy either; while Western European nations reached their pre-war production levels, Turkey had still been unable to start her post-war economic development, being still on a war footing. While receiving some aid from the West, mainly the United States, this was insufficient to both propel economic development and at the same time maintain large quantities of men under arms. James Huston sums up Turkey's situation best:

In other aid programs economic assistance would be offered as a means of strengthening military defenses. Here the tables were turned. Here military aid was seen as a method of relieving some of the economic burden. The aim was to increase Turkish military effectiveness by modernizing the weapons and equipment of the armed forces without adding appreciably to the national budget, and to permit the release of men from the armed forces so that they could return to productive civilian occupations.<sup>53</sup>

As such, when the Democrats came to power in 1950, the general public's assumption was that this situation needed to change. Indeed, the regime change combined with the commitment to the Korean War would by all means change the economic equation dramatically.

### **Foreign Policy**

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<sup>52</sup> Aksin 224-225.

<sup>53</sup> Huston, *James Outposts and Allies* 191

With the devastation of First World War still surrounding them, which had been the result of an entanglement in alliance systems and reckless military adventurism, Turkey's goal from 1923 until the end of the Second World War would be to stay out of any similar conflagration.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, as observed, the destruction was so great from the war that it would cause Turkey to not only rebuild herself physically, but also reassess her identity. As William Hale puts it, "until the mid-1930s, foreign relations took a back seat, as internal reconstruction and reform became the Turkish government's priority, and the international situation did not seem threatening".<sup>55</sup> After establishing independence and national sovereignty via the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, the first major crisis faced by the Republic of Turkey would be the Mosul dispute with Britain. This question would be the main focus of the foreign policy between 1924 and 1926, bringing the two countries to the brink of war; however, at the end, it would be diplomatically resolved through the mediation of the League of Nations, of which Turkey was not a member yet (Turkey would become a member in 1932). As Hale puts it, "the British prepared plans to blockade the Dardanelles, though they were reluctant to resort to force. On the other side, the battle-weary Turks were ultimately not prepared to go to war over Mosul, after their years of struggle".<sup>56</sup> Although there was clearly a military dimension to this matter, the result of this conflict would ultimately set a precedent; Turkey would resolve her conflicts peacefully through diplomatic efforts and political maneuver rather than resorting to military might. In 1950, however, by sending soldiers to Korea, this principle would be forever shattered by the Democrat Party.

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<sup>54</sup> Vali, Ferenc A. Bridge across the Bosphorus. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971. 33

<sup>55</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy. 71.

<sup>56</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy. 58.

In 1931, Atatürk “first summarized his attitude towards foreign affairs with the words ‘Peace at home, peace in the world’.”<sup>57</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Turkey would carefully maneuver within the international arena, ensuring that friendly, or at least cordial, bonds were forged with foreign powers; especially neighbors. Turkey would attain rapprochement with her former enemies during World War One, and seek friendship with her neighbors; in the interwar period, treaties of friendship would be signed with the Soviet Union, Britain, Greece, Italy, and France. Interestingly enough, the Soviet Union would be the first foreign power to support the Turkish nationalists; they signed a Treaty of Friendship in March 1921, resulting additionally in “substantial financial aid to the nationalists, probably amounting to around 10 million gold roubles, plus large amounts of arms and ammunition.”<sup>58</sup> In December 1925, a new Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship was signed with the Soviet Union, which would have a life-span of twenty years; it would be this treaty that the USSR would refuse to renew in 1945, sparking a wave of anxiety within Turkey that would lead up to Korea. For the time being, this “friendly” relationship was certainly not one based on ideological consensus between these two nations; however, certain actions in part by the Turks would give hope to the USSR in this regard, such as the implementation of five-year plans, which began in 1933.<sup>59</sup> Although Turkey was anti-communist, ideology would not be as large a factor as power politics in the structuring of foreign policy for the leadership of Turkey; although still viewed as the main potential enemy, the relationship with the

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<sup>57</sup> Aksin 221.

<sup>58</sup> Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*. 51.

<sup>59</sup> Zurcher, Jan Eric. *Turkey: A Modern History*. Third Edition. London: I.B. Taurus, 2004. 197. “The Soviet Union made available \$8 million in gold to aid the Turkish industrialization programme. In 1933 the first Turkish five-year plan was announced, which largely followed the Soviet recommendations.”

USSR was viewed as a “useful business relationship”.<sup>60</sup> This principle in conducting foreign relations on a flexible basis would be lost sometime before the dust from the Korean War settled as well.

Best demonstrating this point of conducting diplomacy on the basis of recognizing the status quo and not engaging in the dangerous exercise of ideological warfare is, besides relations with the USSR, that of Greece and Turkey. Although having recently engaged in a bloody war that had left tens of thousands dead on both sides, and resulted in the infamous population exchange of 1923, both sides signed a Treaty of Friendship, Neutrality, Mediation and Arbitration in October 1930; this would be followed by an ‘Entente Cordiale’ between the two countries. This action would be followed up in 1934, in response to Mussolini’s Italy increasingly became a threat against the Balkans; Turkey initiated the establishment of negotiations leading up to the Balkan Pact, signed by Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. In 1937, turning to her concerns in the east, she would initiate the establishment of the Sadabad Pact with Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Although both of these defensive pacts would fail to lead to concrete results during the Second World War, they would help in establishing a solid international reputation for Turkey, and also demonstrate that the government simply wanted the country to stay on the defensive. It is clear that there were no intentions to get involved in any alliances that could potentially drag them into a war they did not desire to enter; another principle that would not outlast 1950.

Ataturk’s policy of neutrality would last through his death in 1938, taken up by his successor Ismet Inonu. He would carefully guide the country through World War II,

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<sup>60</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy. 71.



making sure that his nation remained neutral, and thus intact; in a very cautious manner, he thus ensured that the country would preserve her independence and national sovereignty. These actions would not be appreciated at the time, neither by the later victorious Allies, nor by many Turks, where sympathies for both sides divided the population.<sup>61</sup> With the clouds of war looming on the horizon, Turkey would sign an alliance treaty with Britain and France in 25 September 1939, three weeks after Germany invaded Poland. Attached as a condition was that Turkey would not be obligated to enter a war against the Soviet Union; in addition, a secret protocol was included that stated £25 million would be provided in credit to Turkey to buy war materials, as well as an additional loan of £15 million in gold, repayable in Turkish commodities. Turkey would not be obligated to this treaty until all the war materials currently on order, as well as new orders to be covered by the gold loan, had been delivered.<sup>62</sup>

These protocols would be the legalistic concerns cited as excuses by Turkey to not enter the war; first because of the Treaty of Non-aggression between Germany and USSR signed in 1939, and then because the material and gold promised was not delivered. In reality, Turkey was simply in no position to fight a war in 1939, and her leaders knew it: “the total strength of the army was around 195,000 officers and men, but they were mainly armed with weapons of the First World War. The army had very few tanks or armored cars, and was still reliant on horses or mules for transport.”<sup>63</sup> With strong pressure from both sides to join the war, however, it is little surprise that between

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<sup>61</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy. 79-108.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 65.

1939 and 1944 is often referred to as “walking the tightrope” for Turkey.<sup>64</sup> Throughout this time period, Turkey would follow a path to preserve her national sovereignty and independence, and the best way to do so was to stay out of the conflict overall. In 1932, Turkey had signed a treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression with Italy; on June 18, 1941, four days before Hitler’s disastrous invasion of the Soviet Union, a Turkish-German Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression would be signed; however, an alliance request by Germany was rejected, even though Turkey’s largest trading partner at this time was Germany, as had been throughout the 1930s. Thus, Turkey virtually had neutral or friendly diplomatic arrangements with all European belligerents involved in war, playing a game of buying time and hoping for the best. As would be argued by Annette Baker Fox, how a relatively small and outgunned country managed to hold both sides at bay and remain independent was “a striking example of a small state which was no helpless pawn in international politics.”<sup>65</sup>

Overall, between 1923 and 1945, an independent approach that sought to further national interests was put in place; however, this foreign policy would change with the end of the Second World War. The balance of power that had worked so well in a multi-polar world suddenly didn’t seem too suitable for a bipolar world; Turkey was at a geographical disadvantage, blocking the Soviet Union’s southern route to the Middle East and Mediterranean. As the guns across the world went silent in 1945, Turkey was in a precarious position; staying neutral until the end, she had avoided the destruction of war, playing the game of “buying time” until February 23, 1945, when she declared war on

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<sup>64</sup> Pope, et al., Hale, Aksin.

<sup>65</sup> Fox, Annette Baker. The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959. vii.

Germany and Japan. Thus, an invitation to the United Nations conference in San Francisco, to be held on April 25, 1945, was guaranteed. Even as World War II ended, however, Turkey was not in a position to feel too secure; a new world order had emerged in which the USSR, located on her northern border, had become the most powerful entity in the neighborhood. In the west, Bulgaria was occupied by Soviet troops, and in Greece a civil war between the communists and Royalists was raging on.

Turkey, although spared the ravages of war had suffered greatly, and now felt encircled by a new threat. The country had been forced to stay fully mobilized for six years, and had lost her largest trading partner, Germany, in the course of the war. Full demobilization was impossible as well, with fear from the Soviet Union reaching a new level on June 7, 1945, with the termination of the 20-year old Friendship Treaty. As conditions to renew it, the Soviet Union pushed forward new terms which were impossible for Turkey to comply with and maintain independence at the same time. Inonu had been convinced for a long time that “as soon as the Russians came to regard their western boundaries as safe they would no longer care to be friends with us”<sup>66</sup>. On 19 March 1945, Moscow notified Ankara that the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression of 1925, “no longer corresponds to the new situation and requires serious improvement”<sup>67</sup>. This desire did not come as a surprise to Turkish officials; at the Yalta Conference the question of the Turkish Straits had arisen, regarding the Soviet Union’s access to open seas. It was believed that this would be achieved via a revision of the Montreux Convention of 1936, which had given Turkey control over the Straits;

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<sup>66</sup> Weisband, E. Turkish Foreign Policy 1943-1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. 44.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1945. Volume 8. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969. 1219-1220.

however, the Soviet demands did not turn out to be as reasonable as expected. In June, the Soviets clearly stated their demands: the Soviet Union would conclude a new treaty with Turkey only on the conditions that Russia should be granted a base on the Straits and given the provinces of Kars and Ardahan. As such,

The amiable interlude of the interwar period between the two neighbors was over. The Turkish Republic, like the Ottoman Empire in the past, had to rely not only on the interest of Britain but also that of the United States, the new major power, to maintain the *status quo* in the region so as to safeguard its security against the Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the primary goal of the Turkish government was to preserve independence and maintain national sovereignty. Now, faced by Soviet demands bent on compromising her territorial integrity and independence, the Republic of Turkey was being pushed to the American side of the table as the Cold War took form. In a discussion with Ambassador Steinhardt on 31 March 1945, the Turkish Foreign Minister made it clear that they were, “ready to negotiate, but not to be “influenced by the “customary methods” of the Soviet Government, will cede no territory or bases to the Soviets and will employ the armed forces if necessary”.<sup>69</sup> A communiqué from 25 September 1945 from Ambassador Wilson to the Secretary of State analyzed the situation Turkey faced:

Soviet pressure on Turkey beginning with denunciation of friendship pact last March followed by Molotov demands in June and by subsequent radio and press attacks forcing Turkey to maintain large military forces mobilized with consequent strain on already unsatisfactory economic situation is doubtless intended to “soften up” Turkey.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Athanassopoulou, Ekavi. Turkey-Anglo-American Security Interests: 1945-1952. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999. 39.

<sup>69</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1945. Volume 8. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969. 1229-1230.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid 1248-1249

George Kennan would respond to this message two days later, concluding that, “We must expect that any concessions of this nature will be exploited to the utmost in Moscow with view to elimination of western influence in Turkey and establishment of regime “friendly” to Soviet Union.”<sup>71</sup> As the Soviets pushed harder, by launching a propaganda attack via radio against Turkey, and constantly keeping the Turkish government nervous by constant troop movements, the further away they pushed Turkey into the camp of the United States.

At this time, the United States had accepted Turkey as the United Kingdom’s sphere of influence, although her importance was clearly understood. On 12 April 1946, Ambassador Wilson noted that if Turkey lost her independence, “nothing could then prevent Soviets from ascending to Suez, and once this occurs another world conflict becomes inevitable”<sup>72</sup>. On 23 August 1946, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that Turkey was “the most important military factor in defending the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.” The United States was interested in containing the USSR, due to political considerations due to the Cold War, and economic reasons concerning the Middle East, and Turkey remaining outside the “Iron Curtain” was crucial to achieve this; on the other hand, the Turkish government was interested in ensuring that Soviet domination over their country did not occur. These coinciding interests, along with it becoming apparent that the United Kingdom was in no position to defend Turkey, nor to maintain her disintegrating empire, would result in the visit of the *USS Missouri*, on board which the United States and Japan had signed the agreement formally ending World War II a year

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid 1251.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1946. Volume 7. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969. 822-3.

ago. While the official purpose of this voyage had been to deliver back to Turkey the funeral of the Turkish ambassador to the United States, Munir Ertegun, who had died while abroad, the diplomatic ramifications of this visit were enormous.

The *USS Missouri* arrived in Istanbul on 4 April 1946 to cheering crowds, and after the pomp and ceremony the crew was treated to lavish banquets, belly dancing shows, and two blocks of the red light district specially reserved for the visitors, where they were welcome to enjoy the company of prostitutes without charge.<sup>73</sup>

Commemorative souvenirs, including cigarettes and postal stamps, were created to celebrate the event in Turkey. In an omen of what would follow, however,

The American sailors wore out their welcome after only about three days in Istanbul. Their wages were far above those of the Turkish soldiers and sailors, and they flaunted it. They stole the girls away from the Turkish men, which certainly did not endear them to the locals. Some fights and pushing matches ensued, though nothing serious.”<sup>74</sup>

Diplomatically, however, Ambassador Wilson reflected on reception of the visit stating that it had been, “one of the most remarkable demonstrations of friendliness on part of a [government] and people of a foreign country towards US Naval officers and men that has ever occurred in connection with US Naval visit”<sup>75</sup>. He explained that:

This demonstration can be mainly explained by hope engendered in the [Turkish Government] and people by recent developments [in] US foreign policy, culminating in *Missouri* visit, that [the] US has now established [an] independent policy in [the] Near and Middle East based in defense of its own interests in the region, these interests understood as maintenance of peace and security through support of principles of [the United Nations].<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Stillwell, Paul. *Battleship Missouri: An Illustrated History*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996. 99-104.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid 104.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1946*. Volume 7. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969. 822-3.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid 822-3.

This visit marked the beginning of a relationship that constantly grew closer. Turkey had already joined the UN as one of its original members on 24 October 1945, under which five years later Turkey would be dispatching its soldiers to Korea. Economic aid was assigned to Turkey via the Marshall Plan, and the Truman Doctrine, passed in 1947 by the United States Congress assisted Turkey through military aid. When it came to NATO, however, Turkey was rejected. In a report by policy planning staff by the US State Department on June 13 1949, it was determined that although “The loss of Turkey would critically affect US security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East,” the inclusion in this organization for the time being was put on the shelf as it was believed it would perhaps overextend its commitments and cause significant problems, as the “inclusion of Greece would throw the question of aid to Greek guerillas into the [NATO] framework and risk magnifying the question into a crude and primary power issue”<sup>77</sup>. Indeed, the ascension of Turkey into NATO was fundamentally linked to Greece’s acceptance to this organization as well, due to political and geographical considerations. As the memorandum continues, “It would be unrealistic to include Turkey if Greece were not included,” and while touching on the issue of the expansion of the organization notes that, “The countries selected might be limited to Greece and Turkey and in any case would almost certainly include them.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, by no means did this rejection mean that the United States did not realize Turkey’s strategic importance, and necessity to keep it as a “buffer”; neither did it mean that the decision made to keep them out was permanent.

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<sup>77</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1949. Volume 6. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977. 31-45.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid 31-45.

As fears of the Turkish government regarding the Soviet Union grew, however, it gradually became top priority to join an alliance system with the United States; it was decided at the time that joining NATO was the only path to remain independent. This question became a domestic political consideration during the campaigning leading up to the 1950 elections, with Inonu being criticized by the Democrats that he had been unable to get Turkey into this organization and hadn't done enough to protect Turkey. With the election of the Democrat Party to power, NATO had become as much as, if not more of, a domestic political issue than an international one for Turkey. The United States clearly had stated and demonstrated by its actions that it supported them, and the question of an imminent Soviet invasion of Turkey grew ever more unlikely, with the ramification that it would lead to "a worldwide conflagration" being clear to all parties involved. NATO had become more of an issue of prestige of a domestic political party rather than primarily a practical defensive treaty. Still in his first statement as Foreign Minister, Fuat Koprulu would state, "Our foreign policy, which has oriented itself towards the West since World War II, shall take a more active form since the elections."<sup>79</sup> This would, by no means, turn out to be an exaggeration.

### **The 1950 Elections**

With Ataturk's death in 1938, Ismet Inonu, his right-hand man, would replace him, ensuring that Ataturk's vision would continue. The Grand National Assembly would bestow him with the title of "National Chief," which he would officially hold until 1945. The outbreak of the Second World War, and the resulting authoritarian measures taken in order to keep the country out of the war and ensure it remained intact made the

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<sup>79</sup> *Cumhuriyet* 1 June 1950.



regime increasingly unpopular. The alliance that had supported the one-party system was, “weakened by extensive intervention by the state during the war.”<sup>80</sup> In June 1945, four dissident members of the Republican People’s Party, Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Koprulu, and Refik Koraltan, openly questioned the political system in place via a proposal they signed, which would become known as the ‘Proposal of the Four’. The proposal was rejected by the Grand National Assembly; when Menderes and Koprulu started to run critical articles in newspapers, “this was considered a breach of party discipline and both men were expelled”<sup>81</sup>. Koraltan, who denounced these expulsions, and Bayar, who resigned in protest, followed them.

Ten years ago, this would have meant an end to their political careers; however, the times, and fortune, were on their side. Discontent was brewing among all social classes in Turkey against single-party rule; indeed, the ‘Proposal of the Four’ is the most concrete example of this, as it demonstrates to us that this discontent had reached the ranks of the ruling party itself. It has also been argued that there perhaps also was the desire to strengthen bonds with the democratic powers that had recently emerged victorious from World War Two, especially the United States.<sup>82</sup> Besides, as mentioned earlier, democratization had remained an ideological factor, with Ataturk’s and the Republican People’s Party’s goal being to eventually fully transfer power to the people, once they were “ready”. Based on these principles, Inonu decided to give democracy a shot.<sup>83</sup> In a historic speech delivered on 1 November 1945, he stated that, “the Republic of Turkey has always had a democratic character, and never accepted dictatorship. [...]

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<sup>80</sup> Ahmad 11

<sup>81</sup> Ibid 12.

<sup>82</sup> Heper 36.

<sup>83</sup> Howard 115-119.

All that we are absent of is a party that would oppose the state party”<sup>84</sup>. A private meeting between Inonu and Bayar, the most senior member in the group of defectors, followed on 4 December 1945. Both men had fought and worked beside Ataturk; Inonu accepted Bayar’s assurances that the new party would not stray from the Kemalist principles and that there would be no break in foreign policy. In return, Inonu promised to depoliticize the bureaucracy in order to ensure that the new party was given a fair chance.<sup>85</sup> This would lead to the four dissenters establishing the Democrat Party on 7 January 1946, with the blessings of the Republican People’s Party.

The Democrat Party would start out as a political entity more or less identical to the Republican People’s Party; they adopted the six principles of Kemalism, although it would turn out that their interpretations would differ quite a bit than their original intent, most members had formerly been members of the RPP, and the party platform consisted of democratization and economic liberalization, both being on the agenda for the RPP as well. As Feroz Ahmad explains, however,

These claims were valid only while the party was new and virtually confined in membership to a limited group. As the DP organization began to grow and to spread into the provinces, the party began to change its character. It was joined by people for whom the only *raison d’etre* of the party was hostility to the monoparty state.<sup>86</sup>

At the end of the day, the Democrats would win the day not because of the programs they stood for, but rather because they simply provided a viable alternative to the Republican People’s Party, of which most people had grown sick of. As William Hale puts it:

[The Democrat Party] drew together the large and diverse range of people who, for one reason or another, had come to resent the RPP’s long monopoly of political power – farmers who felt neglected by the regime’s

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<sup>84</sup> Erer, Tekin. Türkiye’de Parti Kavgalari. Istanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1966. 224.

<sup>85</sup> Birand 33.

<sup>86</sup> Ahmad 14.

concentration on industrialization, businessmen who hoped to end the dominant role of the state in industry, urban workers and clerks who had suffered severely from wartime inflation, and some religious conservatives who wished to soften the official emphasis on secularism.<sup>87</sup>

As Hale goes on to argue, “Against this national liberal alliance the RPP could offer only its historical role as the party of Atatürk and İnönü, which had spearheaded the dramatic reforms of the 1920s and saved Turkey from the horrors of war between 1939 and 1945.”<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately for İnönü, this reliance on “gratitude” would not be a winning formula.

Almost immediately after the Democrat Party was established, the government decided to call early elections, not giving a chance for their opposition to get organized. Unfortunately, when the election took place on 21 July 1946, the results were obviously rigged, causing widespread discontent. With the news of fraud published in the press, which was no longer censored, this matter would come back to hurt the RPP in 1950; while it would ensure that the upcoming elections would be fair, it also cast a shadow of doubt on the Republican People’s Party. For the time being, the Republicans had won an overwhelming victory, receiving 390 seats out of 465. Seven seats went to independents, while the Democrats received 65; however, considering they were newly founded and not fully organized yet, this had been an impressive showing.<sup>89</sup> Although the RPP would attempt to steal the DP’s thunder by introducing economic and politics reforms, “Ordinary Turks still linked İnönü to the autocratic repression of the war years”<sup>90</sup>. Thus,

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<sup>87</sup> Hale, William. Turkish Politics and the Military. New York: Routledge, 1994. 89.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid 89.

<sup>89</sup> Karpas, K.H. Turkey’s Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959. 164.

<sup>90</sup> Howard 119.

based on all the aforementioned, the Democrat Party would win in 1950 a crushing victory over the Republican People's Party.

As discussed earlier, although Inonu certainly had the means at his disposal to cancel the election results and stay in power virtually indefinitely, he allowed the results to stay. In the words of Feroz Ahmad, "The Democrats had succeeded in wresting political power at the polls from the well-entrenched ruling party, a rare accomplishment in the politics of developing countries"<sup>91</sup>. On the other hand, Sevkett Sureyya Aydemir praises Inonu: "Facing the election law he had personally introduced backfiring, ending in a result that was contrary to his interests, Inonu's unconditional acceptance of the results shall be interpreted in the history of Turkish democracy as demonstrating his quality as an exemplary statesman."<sup>92</sup> Indeed, Inonu personally had introduced the new election law that had permitted this transition to democracy, and when the results turned out to be against him, he made sure that his party respected the results, and that the military and state bureaucracy stayed neutral. Although defeated at the polls, he proudly declared, "My defeat is my greatest victory"<sup>93</sup>. Inonu would go on to "take it upon himself during the next decade to demonstrate the meaning of 'loyal opposition'"<sup>94</sup>. In the years to follow, faced with the same situation, the Democrat Party would act very differently; they would try to hold on to power, whatever the consequences, leading to catastrophic results. Still, for the time being, the air was pregnant with hope for a better future. Turkey had transitioned into a democratic, multi-party system under a new

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<sup>91</sup> Ahmad, Feroz. The Turkish Experiment in Democracy: 1950-1975. London: C. Hurst and Company, 1977. 35

<sup>92</sup> Aydemir, Sevkett Sureyya. İkinci Adam. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1968. 27.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 415.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid 120.

leadership peacefully. Foreign observers were impressed by this peaceful transition of power, and the Turkish people overall had great expectations.

## CHAPTER 2

### Coinciding Interests – Turkey’s path to involvement in Korea

*“When whales fight, the shrimp in the middle get crushed”*

-Korean proverb

#### The Sacrifice

On the afternoon of September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1950, thousands of soldiers crowded the harbor of Iskenderun waiting to board transport ships to begin a three-week voyage to Pusan, Korea, a destination thousands of miles away. Their situation perhaps reflects the greater picture of the political status quo at the time for Turkey. The troops, represented from every part of the country, wore British-style army uniforms and helmets, adopted by the Turkish armed forces in 1942, and were equipped with German Mausers, most of them relics of the First World War<sup>95</sup>. This gear would completely be revamped in Korea, where everything from their uniforms to the weapons they carried would be replaced with American gear. The location they had crowded in, the port, was subject to extensive repair work and expansion; the purpose for this was to ensure that in the case of an invasion by the Soviet Union, the harbor would be large enough to rapidly furnish a supply base that would be established in this southernmost point of Turkey. The funds for this project, as well as the request for it, was being provided by the same source supplying the five transport ships waiting to be boarded in the harbor: the United States of America. Interestingly enough, although being sent under the umbrella of the United

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<sup>95</sup> Tamkoc, Metin. The Warrior Diplomats.

Nations, the Turkish troops would fall under the command of the United States, appointed by the UN to this leadership position.<sup>96</sup>

Yet that day these subjects were not in the minds of most of the men gathered at the docks of Iskenderun; most had feelings mixed with the fear of going to a faraway, unknown land, from which their chances of returning were uncertain, and pride and excitement at being given a chance to represent their nation.<sup>97</sup> This was the first war the Turkish nation was engaging in since the War of Independence (1919-1922). Virtually all of these men going to war had grown up listening to the stories of their fathers and older male family members fighting in this heroic war by which they had won their independence and national sovereignty. Now they believed it was their turn to prove their mettle and serve their fatherland in the same way the generation before them had done.

The transport ships captivated many; most of them had simply never seen ships so large before, were awed by their presence, and excited at the prospect of soon being in them<sup>98</sup>. The ships belonged to a nation that represented protection from the USSR and security for Turkey. They represented modernity, democracy, and a strong economy; they meant retaining national sovereignty and independence. Yet for the soldiers all these beckoning visions would come to mean arduous conditions, barbed wire, minefields, bayonet charges, trenches, fire, and blood; however, for now, all waited to board the ships, wondering if they would ever return. As it turns out, many would not.

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<sup>96</sup> Stueck. The Korean War.

<sup>97</sup> Interviews.

<sup>98</sup> Interviews; Yalta, Bahtiyat. Kunuri Muharebeleri ve Geri Cekilmeler

So how had this come to pass? How could a country that had pursued active neutrality since its foundation end up sending thousands of her sons to a seemingly irrelevant conflict thousands of miles away from home? How would it be a turning point in the history of the Republic of Turkey; a decision that would lead to the earth shattering events on the morning of May 27, 1960, and have aftershocks that would echo until today? The answers to these questions are not straightforward. In order to get to these answers, firstly the decision of the Republic of Turkey to contribute soldiers to Korea must be fully understood.

### **June 25, 1950**

On the pre-dawn hours of June 25, 1950, the guns that had fallen silent across the world five years ago opened up in Korea. After months of political and military escalation, the armed forces of the Soviet-backed Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched an all-out invasion against her US-backed southern neighbor, the Republic of Korea. Hundreds of thousands of troops poured across the border in a carefully coordinated attack, which the invaders justified by the claim that their southern neighbors had acted first. Caught completely off guard, forces of the Republic of Korea fell back in disarray; within three days, Seoul, their capital, had fallen. While a quick victory seemed at hand for the North Koreans, the United Nations intervened, under the leadership of the United States. This action would result in bloody, bitter fighting for three years in a protracted war, the end of which we have officially not yet seen.

While often what ensued remains largely forgotten by the public, and if anything remembered as an “unpopular police action”, in reality, as William Stueck points out in his study, “The Korean War: An International History”, the war, “contributed

significantly to the evolution of an order that escaped the ultimate horror of a direct clash of superpowers. In its timing, its course, and its outcome, the Korean War served in many ways as a substitute for World War III<sup>99</sup>. Besides this, the Korean War would set precedents that would set the tone for the remainder of the Cold War: the multilateral dimension, the fact that the war was waged within the institutional framework of the United Nations, that the powers and causes directing the war were not local to Korea, the global impact of the war, and the resulting worldwide military buildup and its political and economic consequences all would shape the interaction between the two superpowers until the end of the Cold War. Indeed, the impact of the Korean War has physical remnants; the Korean peninsula remains divided up until this day and no peace treaty formally ending the war has ever been signed. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north and Republic of Korea in the south remain separated by the "most heavily fortified border in the world"<sup>100</sup>: the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which runs across the length of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

### **The Cold War Turns Hot**

According to Stueck, today it is clear that General Secretary Kim Il-Sung, leader of North Korea, had acted not under the orders of, but rather with the approval and assistance of Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin: "Few Koreans accepted the division of their country, and there was no assurance that unification could occur to the Communists' satisfaction by any means short of an overt North Korean attack"<sup>101</sup>. The Russian and Chinese leadership had given their approval because they believed that the United States

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<sup>99</sup> Stueck 3.

<sup>100</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/east/02/19/koreas.dmz/>

<sup>101</sup> Stueck 31.



would not get involved in this unification process. This stance could be especially attributed to a series of statements by US officials regarding Korea, culminating in Dean Acheson's remarks that "Beyond Japan, the Ryukyus, and the Philippines, the United States could not guarantee areas in the Western Pacific "against military attack".<sup>102</sup> Joseph Stalin especially saw this as a good chance to weaken the stance of the United States and establish Soviet hegemony over the Communist bloc, ensuring that Mao didn't become "an Asian Tito". As Stueck puts it: "What better method to draw U.S. efforts from the decisive theater of the cold war, to further dampen anti-Communist morale in western Europe, and to solidify China's isolation from the West than a quick, successful, proxy venture in Korea?"<sup>103</sup>

On the other hand, the United States was put into a position where it was forced to act in Korea in order to remain a legitimate world power. There was much concern over the recent detonation of a Soviet atomic bomb, followed a few weeks later by the Communist victory in Mainland China. Simultaneously, the French in Indochina, the British in Malaya, and the pro-US regimes in Taiwan, the Philippines, Burma, and Thailand were under varying degrees of attack by Communist forces.<sup>104</sup> The American government believed at the time that the Communist bloc was a monolithic entity, a threat that had to be countered by a policy of containment.

Based on these perceptions, it is little surprise that when war broke out in Korea, the United States reacted immediately; as put by Stueck, in light of what followed, "Kim, Stalin, and Mao got more than they bargained for. The North Korean attack came at a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid 30.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid 37.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid 41-42.

time of increasing alarm in Washington over recent international developments and growing pressure on the Truman administration to act decisively in Asia”<sup>105</sup>. Acting under the United Nations, the United States ensured that the same day the invasion began, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 82, which called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and North Korea to withdraw to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, requested the UN Commission on Korea to monitor the situation, and called upon all Member States to support the UN resolution and refrain from giving assistance to North Korean authorities.<sup>106</sup> Two days later, on 27 June 1950, UNSC Resolution 83 was passed, which recommended, “that the Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.”<sup>107</sup> In response to this call, sixteen countries ended up contributing combat units, and five countries contributed medical units on behalf of the United Nations.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly enough, one of the first countries to commit ground troops would be the Republic of Turkey.

### **Turkey’s Reaction: “An Opportunity”**

Although the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula took place thousands of miles away from her borders, this event was hard to ignore in the Republic of Turkey. An example of the public reaction manifests itself in the headlines of *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi* on 26 June 1950, which stated, “News of War Causes Great Panic in Ankara”.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid 41.

<sup>106</sup> Gruenberg 178-9

<sup>107</sup> Ibid 180.

<sup>108</sup> Countries contributing combat units included Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, South Africa, the United Kingdom, South Korea and the United States. Medical units were provided by Denmark, India, Italy, Norway and Sweden. Mango, Anthony, et al. Encyclopedia of the United Nations. 1238.

The article goes on to mention that those who heard over the radio that war had broken out in Korea panicked, causing an unending string of phone calls to news agencies to ask if World War III had finally broken out.<sup>109</sup> To say the least, the Turkish public reaction had been one of great concern; however, it appears to be the case that the Turkish government did not share this immediate feeling of anxiety. In a discussion on 28 June 1950 between General McBride Chief of the Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey (JAMMAT), which had been established in 1948, and Fuat Koprulu, newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, “The impression left was that the Turkish authorities considered this more or less a local affair and that it would not spread beyond the Korean area”.<sup>110</sup>

The immediate reaction taken by the Turkish government appears to be quite rational and measured. On 29 June 1950, the Turkish government replied in affirmative to the resolution adopted two days earlier, stating that it was ready to comply “loyally and in complete conformity with the provisions of the Charter the undertakings which Turkey has assumed as a Member of the United Nations.”<sup>111</sup> On 2 July 1950, the Turkish government sent another communiqué to the United Nations, reiterating the fact that it had responded faithfully to the UN resolution, stating that it was ready to comply, “with any decisions taken by the Security Council on this subject and to enter into contact with the Council”.<sup>112</sup> Still, the manner in which this aid would manifest itself was not decided on as of yet. This matter almost instantaneously led to a public debate in Turkey over how the shape the aid to Korea should be, and grew heated very quickly. In the media,

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<sup>109</sup> Cumhuriyet 26 June 1950

<sup>110</sup> FRUS 1950 Volume V, 1275-1276.

<sup>111</sup> Document S/1529

<sup>112</sup> Document S/1552

there appears to be almost no public questioning or debate over the fact that Turkey in some manner should send some kind of assistance to Korea; however, the question of “how” appears to be omnipresent. The options ran from moral support and humanitarian aid, such as medicine, clothing, and food, to troop deployment, a much more serious commitment. Newspaper columnist and former Member of Parliament, Abidin Daver wrote in his column in *Cumhuriyet* on 8 July 1950 that a symbolic gesture on part of Turkey to Korea would in return reciprocate a response in kind if Turkey were faced with a similar situation:

The answer of the Republic of Turkey to this aggression should certainly not be a platonic response, the effects of which would remain merely on paper. It is impossible to push back an armed invasion via speeches and empty promises. [...] The role of this aid is to ensure that in the future when an invasion against our country takes place, the United Nations shall reciprocate this gesture and to our aid as well. A symbolic gesture simply would not be the right answer.<sup>113</sup>

The extremity of the public reaction, whipped into a frenzy by the media, is demonstrated by an initiative taken by Tevfik Yucelten, the son of a Democrat Party Member of Parliament. In response to the Korean situation, he formed a private “organization” that was meant to fight the Communists in Korea. On 4 July 1950, it was reported that 3,000 had signed up to fight in Korea; however, two days later this venture was shut down in accordance to the 128<sup>th</sup> article of the Turkish Penal Code that forbade the formation of private armies.<sup>114</sup> The United States, which at this point was actively searching for countries to recruit for the fight in Korea noted this effort, and met its disbandment with some private disappointment.<sup>115</sup> Observing this situation, former

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<sup>113</sup> Abidin Daver, “Konseyin Kararı ve Türkiye”, *Cumhuriyet*, 8 Temmuz 1950.

<sup>114</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 4 and 6 July 1950.

<sup>115</sup> Office of Intelligence Research, “World Reaction to Korean Developments, No. 22”. July 19, 1950.

Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak, on the other hand, took the opposing point of view. It is clear, considering he had lost this post only a few weeks ago to Fuat Koprulu, that he had the best knowledge of what was taking place. He made his views public in *Aksam Gazetesi* on 16 July 1950, stating that:

The sixty nations that belong to the United Nations shall respond to this crisis in a morally supportive or symbolic manner; only those countries close to the region or those nations that have the means at their disposal shall respond in concrete, material terms. An Eastern Mediterranean country responding in a concrete and serious manner to a situation that is taking place in the Pacific, under today's conditions, is simply mind-boggling, and naturally impossible. Who can Turkey help and whose aid can help Turkey? Turkey already has allies, and mutual responsibilities as a result of these arrangements. Based on the alliances we currently are a part of, we have no obligation to get militarily involved in the Korean War; thus, the supporters of such a decision cannot put this forth as a valid excuse. Besides this, the United States would assist us in the event of an emergency. We have no official alliance with them; however, we have a mutual unity of interests, the Truman doctrine, and military aid; the interest shown by the Americans in Turkey's territorial integrity and autonomy has made us firmly conclude that if Turkey is invaded they shall come to our aid.

There is nobody ignorant of the delicate situation Turkey is in right now. If we try to put aside a force for Korea, our friends and allies would certainly object. We find it not helpful that there are those who are organizing volunteer forces to fight in Korea, creating organizations for these purposes, and even getting into fights regarding this matter. The decision ultimately belongs to the Parliament.<sup>116</sup>

Unfortunately for him, his association with the *ancien regime* had the disadvantage of making his statements not credible among the majority of the public, and the Democrat Party, which viewed his response to this crisis as being colored by this relationship. At this time, the Democrats were afraid of being considered by the public as appearing to be under the control of the RPP; this would result in advice not being asked from them.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Necmeddin Sadak, "Kore Savasi ve Turkiye" *Aksam* 16 Temmuz 1950

<sup>117</sup> Birand, Ali. Demirkirat.

While the private initiative by Yucelten was clamped down on, an even greater chance was about to present itself for the United States. On 22 July 1950, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuat Koprulu, contacted US Ambassador to Turkey, George Wadsworth. In the conversation that ensued, Mr. Koprulu made it known that the Turkish government was considering, “offering effective assistance (including ground forces) to resist North Korean aggression.”<sup>118</sup> He went on to explain that, “the Turkish Government [wishes] its reply [to] “bear witness to its sincere desire manifest by practical action its loyalty to [the] UN and [Turkish]-US collaboration,” and to do so, “We wish particularly that our reply conform with US policy and public opinion.”<sup>119</sup> The Turkish government, which in practicality means in this case the Democrat Party leadership, via this statement was basically asking what the United States wanted them to give in order to get on their good side. As noted by Ambassador Wadsworth in this communiqué, Maj. General Egeli had written in an informal memorandum to Gen. Nuri Yamut that, “It will be [the] greatest crime in Turkish history if we fail to take advantage of this opportunity”<sup>120</sup>. By doing so, the Democrats and the commanders they had newly appointed, hoped to reap benefits domestically and internationally, as shall be observed; however, the fact that this offer effectively also meant compromising precedents set regarding military involvement outside of Turkey’s boundaries, laws regarding Parliament’s right to declare war, and the independence and national sovereignty of the country appears to have not come to mind.

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<sup>118</sup> FRUS 1950 Volume V (123 Wadsworth, George: Telegram) July 24, 1950 – 11 a.m. Secret, Priority. Page 1281-2.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> U.S. Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950. Volume V. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978. 1282.

In response to this offer, the ambassador immediately contacted Senator Cain, who was visiting Turkey to observe the progress of the American military aid program, and General McBride, Chief of JAMMAT. It would be this group of three foreign government officials, consisting of a diplomat, a US senator, and a military advisor, who came up with the specific terms that ended up sending thousands of Turkish soldiers on a journey many would never return from:

Yesterday [23 July], after consultation with McBride and Senator Cain [...] I decided to reply that in my personal view [the] Turkish Government could best manifest its support of UN policies by prompt dispatch of [a] fully equipped regimental combat team. [...] General McBride described [the] latter as [...] a fully self-contained combat unit of between 4,000 and 4,500 officers and men approximately 10 percent above war strength.<sup>121</sup>

The die was cast. Two days later, on July 25, at a news conference in Ankara, in reply to a question during a news conference, Senator Cain said, "I can say we are going to be much more sympathetic in helping those who helped most in Korea, we want all of our friends tied together as free nations militarily, economically and politically."<sup>122</sup>

Coincidentally, the next day, on 26 July 1950, the United Nations received a response from Turkey regarding its request for assistance from members:

[The] Government of the Republic of Turkey, believing it to be its duty to comply with the obligations arising from the Charter of the United Nations as well as with the decisions of the Security Council, has examined carefully and in this spirit your aforementioned cablegram. As a result of this consideration, and realizing, in the present world conditions and in the interest of general peace, the necessity and importance of the effective implementation of the aforementioned decisions, the Government of the Republic of Turkey has decided to place at the disposal of the United Nations a Turkish combat force of 4,000 men to serve in Korea.<sup>123</sup>

#### **Analyzing the decision**

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> FRUS 1950 Volume V, page 1286.

<sup>123</sup> Document S/1630, UN Security Council Documents, 1950 – Supplementary Documents 102-103

We are sitting in a large, yet modest apartment in the Asian side of Istanbul, drinking tea. Outside, the Sea of Marmara can be seen. I am the guest of Mr. Burhan Apaydin, who sits next to me on a wheelchair, one of the most respected lawyers in Turkey, widely known for his integrity, who served in some of the most crucial trials in the history of the Republic. Among other accomplishments, he would defend Prime Minister Adnan Menderes after his regime was overthrown on 27 May 1960, against odds that were unbeatable. While we shall touch on that experience later on, at this point we are discussing his experiences during the outbreak of the Korean War. In the years between 1946 and 1950, he had played a major role regarding the legal aspect of the elections. The 1948 bill passed in Parliament with Inonu's approval regarding the elections of 1950 taking place under the supervision of the judiciary was Mr. Apaydin's proposal; this had ensured a fair election, unlike that of 1946. In 1950, he was a professor of law, and at the same time a practicing lawyer, very much involved in the legal procedures of the government at the time.

"The declaration of war came to everybody as a complete surprise," he recalls. "Nobody had seriously believed we would go to war in Korea. We didn't even know where that country was located". He then recalls an interesting incident that occurred a few days later: "A few days after the war was declared I was having a business lunch at Karpic Restaurant, across from the Park Palace Hotel. Back at that time, it was the most famous restaurant in Ankara," remembers Mr. Apaydin.

As we were leaving, I noticed the Foreign Minister of the time, Fuat Koprulu, walking out of the restaurant. I walked up to him and greeted him – we were acquainted, you see. I told him that I disagreed with the decision that had been made regarding Korea. I informed him that it was an illegal action to send troops to war without the approval of Parliament.



I let him know that this action was against the constitution. His response to me was very curt and simple: “İstim arkasından gelsin.”<sup>124</sup> Mr. Burhan gathers his thoughts for a moment before continuing: “The opposition would use this point, regarding the legality of the deployment, in attacking the Democrats. It is true that a resolution regarding Korea was eventually passed; however, that by no means legitimizes the initial action taken by the Cabinet.”<sup>125</sup>

By this action, the Turkish government had deferred its national sovereignty, represented by the control over the fate of its own troops, to the Americans; the proposal for sending a brigade would physically come from Ankara, but not from the Turkish government or military, but rather from foreign dignitaries. Exactly what the Americans had “recommended” was given, which as it turns out, was done so in an unconstitutional manner, without Parliament’s approval, as Mr. Apaydin points out. In most historians’ accounts describing Turkey’s path to Korea the decision process is often completely ignored or shortly glossed over; for example, Fusun Turkmen’s account states that there was no “objection towards the substance of the decision,” and that the problem had to do with not “why,” but rather “how.”<sup>126</sup> It in fact was one of the most controversial actions taken by the Democrat Party. A government that had kept them out of a worldwide conflict had just preceded them, and here was a government, five years later, only two months into being voted in that was dragging Turkey into a seemingly irrelevant conflict. Indeed, the initial reaction of the Republican People’s Party would be one of shock and disapproval, as demonstrated by a press release by the General Secretary of the RPP:

The Republican People’s Party understands our country’s responsibilities towards the United Nations. We believe that peace in the world can be

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<sup>124</sup> “Let the steam come afterwards”

<sup>125</sup> Apaydin, Burhan. Interview, January 2008.

<sup>126</sup> Turkmen, Fusun. Turkey and the Korean War. 170.

achieved only by mutual defense through the United Nations. Only by member nations realizing that an attack on one of them is against all of them, and taking action immediately, can peace be achieved. The United Nations has left it to each member state to decide, according to their means, how they would best be able to give assistance; like our peers, we could have responded with a proposal within our means and appropriate for our current position. It should be self-evident that sending assistance in the form of combat troops is best suitable for those who have the means to do so. [...] In making this decision, neither Party Chairman Inonu nor any RPP official with authority was consulted or informed. It is important, however, that in important matters such as national defense and a decision to go to war, the opposition party should be allowed to voice its views in order to ensure national unity.<sup>127</sup>

Ismet Inonu as well was disappointed: “During the Second World War, when the conflict reached our doorstep, and the German armies were at our borders, while the decision was being made to cut economic relations with this country, the Republican People’s Party still allowed this matter to be debated in the Grand National Assembly.”<sup>128</sup> On the same day this article was published, the RPP’s newspaper *Ulus* claimed that the Democrat Party had violated the 26<sup>th</sup> Article of the Turkish Constitution, which stated that the decision to declare war belonged to the Grand National Assembly.<sup>129</sup> As for Nihat Erim, the chief politics editor for *Ulus*,

The youth within our military serving their compulsory duty are responsible for guarding our national borders. To give them any responsibility besides this duty, it is necessary for the Grand National Assembly to vote on a decision or pass a law. [...] So how has this decision made without parliamentary approval?<sup>130</sup>

Professors Huseyin Nail Kubali and Burhan Apaydin as well printed editorials stating that the legality of this decision was questionable.<sup>131</sup> Other criticism that came from the RPP claimed that this decision compromised national security, as the Soviet

<sup>127</sup> Cumhuriyet, 27 July 1950.

<sup>128</sup> Hurriyet, 28 July 1950

<sup>129</sup> Ulus, 28 July 1950

<sup>130</sup> Ulus, Nihat Erim, “Hukümetin son kararı” 27 July 1950

<sup>131</sup> Milliyet, 28 Temmuz 1950, “Hukümetin Kararı ve Hukukcuların Fikri”

Union would certainly get aggravated from this aggressive stance, that Turkey needed all of its soldiers at home, and accused the regime of “adventurism”.<sup>132</sup> The Nation Party, which had won a single seat in 1950 – and would be shut down in 1953, charged with following political lines against secularism – as well criticized this decision, mainly due to the fact that the regime had not asked for parliamentary approval.<sup>133</sup> As their only Member of Parliament, Osman Bolukbasi, would say regarding the decision: “We are saying that the authority to send soldiers lies in the hands of this parliament. Even if these soldiers were being sent by Sultan Abdulhamit and not Menderes, our heart would still have beat with our troops.”<sup>134</sup> This attitude of supporting the troops while opposing the action taken by the government would be picked up by the RPP as well. Indeed, all political and public spheres appear to have held the military in the highest esteem; however, it is also clear that the government and military were considered separate entities. While in theory the military was supposed to be subordinated to the civilian government, in practice this would be harder to implement. These approaches would have an important impact regarding how things would turn out.

On the other hand, the Democrat Party leadership would claim that this had not been a declaration of war, but compliance with the UN Charter, which had been signed into law by Turkey, and therefore not an unconstitutional act. In the words of Menderes: “The decision made by our regime has not been a decision of war, but one of defending peace. In our opinion, if other freedom-loving people take a similar stance, such

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<sup>132</sup> Cumhuriyet, 28 July 1950.

<sup>133</sup> Cumhuriyet, 27 July 1950.

<sup>134</sup> TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Donem 9, Cilt 3, 140-143.

international violations can be prevented and world peace can be preserved.”<sup>135</sup> He goes on to state that sending abroad a force of 4,500 soldiers would not hurt Turkey’s self-defense capacity, and that, “the independence and integrity of countries cannot be defended within their borders. In peace and war, it has become self-evident that all countries in the world share a common fate. Our flag flying over Korea shall be the concrete result of the most idealist and realist views.”<sup>136</sup> In response to this statement, newspaper columnist Hikmet Bayur made the observation that,

The contribution made could have been consisted of money or a field hospital; indeed, many countries have done so. The regime, on the other hand, did not make it clear at all to parliament that it would commit ground troops. As it seems fairly clear now, parliament had nothing besides such moral support in mind.<sup>137</sup>

It is clear that the decision made regarding Korea was questioned within the Democrat Party’s ranks as well, although the party discipline exercised prevented from this disagreement to present in its façade. This intra-party conflict comes to light especially through the Deputy Prime Minister Samet Agaoglu, from his memoirs titled My Friend Menderes. He recalls that during a party meeting held to discuss this matter, the Prime Minister angrily responded to a challenge against this decision, attacking the questioner’s integrity.<sup>138</sup>

It is clear that this issue also extended into the municipality elections that took place on 3 September 1950, in which the Democrat Party would further devastate the RPP; in Menderes’s words, “The Turkish people removed the People’s Party from power

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<sup>135</sup> Cumhuriyet 29 July 1950

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Hikmet Bayur, “Kore Meselesi ve Basbakanın Sozleri” Kudret 30 Temmuz 1950

<sup>138</sup> Agaoglu, Samet. Arkadasim Menderes.

on 14 May; on 3 September they removed them from the opposition”<sup>139</sup>. The Democrats would utilize patriotism as a tool against the Republicans, via accusing them of propaganda against the war; they claimed that Republican representatives were giving anti-war speeches, saying such things as, “[The Democrats] shall cause your sons and husbands to be killed in foreign lands. They shall lead our country to war and disaster.”<sup>140</sup>

The debate went back and forth until December, taking so long because parliament went out of session eleven days before the government’s decision on Korea was made, and opening an emergency session was refused; therefore, until the Ninth Session of the Grand National Assembly, which commenced on 1 November 1950, no action could be taken. By the time the matter was brought up for voting in parliament, Turkish troops already had been trained, shipped, retrained, and fighting bitterly in Korea. The resolution for sending troops passed in parliament with 311 in favor, 39 in opposition, and one abstaining vote in December 1950.<sup>141</sup> Still, the war was used politically by both sides throughout the war; for example, during the mid-term elections of 1951, RPP Member of Parliament Aziz Uras would say: “Soldiers are being sent to Korea in an unlawful manner. Those who die in this conflict cannot be considered martyrs; Korea has become a slaughterhouse”. Legal procedures were opened against him, as well as RPP Secretary General Kasim Gulek, for anti-war commentary. Both

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<sup>139</sup> Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi 165

<sup>140</sup> Cumhuriyet 25 August 1950.

<sup>141</sup> TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Donem 9

were investigated by a Parliamentary Commission, as a result of which charges were dropped.<sup>142</sup>

Yet why did things turn out as they did? As mentioned earlier, the Democrat Party-led government, only a little over a month ago had come to power. It must be kept in mind that their goal at this time was to consolidate power. Since the popular support was already within their hands, the main challenge they perceived came from the pre-existing bureaucracy and military establishment, both of which in their eyes was embodied by the Republican People's Party.<sup>143</sup> Their reaction to this war, hence, must be examined in this context; by all means, this international situation had domestic repercussions for Turkey, as observed. It is clear from the reaction to the Korean War by the new regime, manifested by Koprulu's discussion with McBride, that they clearly were not ignorant or inexperienced of the overall international situation, and not easily swayed by an alarmist public, which was being fed by the media images of impending doom, as shall be examined in a bit. The public, on the other hand, was overall swept up by the media's sensational coverage, and added to the DP's manipulation of the situation, ignored voices of calm of the RPP leadership. Yet that leaves us with a fundamental question: if Turkey's interests were clearly not being directly threatened and the political figures overall understood this, then why send troops to Korea?

It is clear that the new regime, under its leader Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, felt intimidated by the "Pasha factor," the belief that the military and bureaucratic elements would choose to stay loyal to Ismet Inonu, the former revolutionary,

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<sup>142</sup> Cumhuriyet 27 March 1952.

<sup>143</sup> Birand 91.

commander, and “National Chief” over the new regime.<sup>144</sup> This was certainly no irrational conclusion, as General Noyan’s phone call to Inonu that took place on the evening of 14 May 1950 had leaked to the press, causing much consternation among the Democrats; however, it is clear that the Republican People’s Party had conceded to the national will, and although among the armed forces there might have been those who were dedicated to Inonu, “the vast majority of the army appeared content with the political change within the country”<sup>145</sup>. Thus, although there was by no means any concrete desire to topple the new regime, the perception of the situation being otherwise by the Democrats led to an approach that was meant to isolate the RPP leadership. Consequently, a purge within the upper ranks of the armed forces took place. On 5 June 1950, 15 top-ranking generals, including the Chief of the General Staff and his immediate subordinates, and 150 colonels were politely informed that they were being forced into retirement.<sup>146</sup> The decision of the Democrats of sending troops to Korea also could be interpreted as getting this institution out of its way, and distracting any potential opposition to its domestic policies by uniting the country against a common external threat.

The policies of the Democrats in the long run would have rather devastating consequences. For example, by placing their men at the top of the military hierarchy, the Democrat Party was able to subordinate the military establishment successfully for the time being; however, this would give the feeling of illegitimacy and plant seeds of resentment, which would grow exponentially over the next ten years, among young,

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<sup>144</sup> Zurcher, Jan E. Turkey: A Modern History. London: I.B. Taurus, 2004: 222.

<sup>145</sup> Birand 80.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid 79-80.

ambitious officers. Encouraged by the United States, the Menderes government borrowed heavily and relied on foreign aid for building up Turkey's economy and infrastructure. Building the massive, modern army that was a part of its new commitment to NATO would turn out to be a double-edged sword; the economic policy would become a burden that would hurt rather than help Turkey. Economic and military aid, which would come in larger quantities thanks to sending troops to Korea, instead of making Turkey more independent turned out to make it less so, discouraging local industrial development, not to mention causing a never-ending cycle of foreign debt. Interestingly enough, the Turkish leadership under Menderes appears to have overestimated the power of the "recommendation"; the US State Department would send out a telegram to Ambassador Wadsworth on July 28, clearly noting that there was, "concern lest Senator Cain's statements lead Turkish Government believe its offer [to] assist in Korea might result in Turkey's inclusion [to] the Atlantic Pact and increased economic aid"<sup>147</sup>. An application to NATO on 1 August 1950 would be rejected, causing the Democrat leadership to feel temporarily feel betrayed, but as a result push even harder for acceptance to NATO. At the end, these goals would be achieved, even though they would come at a very heavy price.

The decision to send troops to Korea would be one of these decisions that proved to be shortsighted. It was meant to be a short-circuit mechanism to bring Turkey into NATO, and gain confidence and respect internationally, while domestically reap the rewards of this via votes and foreign military and economic aid. Instead of continuing the path of tenacious diplomatic maneuvering and patience set down by its predecessors,

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<sup>147</sup> FRUS 1950 Volume V 1285-1289.



the Democrat leadership chose a new path of international dependence and reliance on domestic popular power, with authoritarianism padded with “national will”. It must be concluded that the decision to send troops to Korea was not one of inexperience or benevolence; rather, it resulted from a combination of playing on domestic emotions for votes and gaining US support, boiling down to domestic political considerations.

### **The Domestic Reaction**

The public reaction to the Korean War certainly was in the favor of the Democrat Party; on the other hand, the Republican reaction of caution caused them to get further alienated. There was a feeling of impending doom among most people, with a Soviet invasion very much seen a possibility, even though in reality this at the time was very unlikely. In the eyes of many, the Republicans had done too little for national defense, and criticized their social reform efforts:

God forbid, if there is a war, what would happen to Turkey? We would have nothing besides God to save us. What would happen to our large cities and people in the face air raids that would drop poison gas, destruction, fire, and perhaps bacteria; or even atom and hydrogen bombs? What has our previous regime done to prevent this? When one day the air sirens go off, shall the masses shall take cover in the People’s Homes, the monuments, open air theatres, covered gymnasiums, the newly built magnificent Parliament building that has chairs for deputies worth 5,000 lira each, the new fifty million dollar university building, or the Anitkabir [Ataturk’s Mausoleum] under construction that will cost god knows how many millions of dollars?<sup>148</sup>

The Democrats would seize this opportunity to launch an attack on the RPP; within the next few years, the contribution to Korea and the successes in joining NATO and being highly involved in the international scene would be a very successful method of attack. Not only regarding foreign policy, but also economics, the Democrats would cause Turkey to rely heavily on the United States.

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<sup>148</sup> Ismail Hakki Danisment, “Ofdeki Olem”, Milliyet, 30 Haziran 1950.

While the press whipped up the public with fear and sensationalism, it is clear that most people did not even know where Korea was, including those being sent over there.

A Turkish soldier who served in Korea described his family's knowledge as follows:

Our neighbor asked, "Is this place we are being told of far from us?" to another neighbor woman next to her.

"Oh my, don't you know! It is supposed to be close to China!"

"Of course I know where that is. Do you think I am ignorant? But I can't figure out where the country of 'Communism' is located."

"That's supposed to be close to Korea as well, I read it in the newspaper"

"Well, so why did our soldiers go there anyhow?"<sup>149</sup>

The public and political reaction in Turkey to the troop deployment is skipped over in most accounts of the war, and highly politicized in the cases that it is covered. Merely studying the headlines of most Turkish newspapers, it is easy to reach the conclusion that the decision was fully understood and backed the vast majority of the public, and most studies simply back this claim without any evidence and move on; however, looking more closely, a non-controversial situation is very far from the truth. As mentioned earlier, the opposition was launching attacks on the Democrats for starting an illegal war. While the general population didn't even know where Korea is in first place, the military, on the other hand, was trained for defensive warfare, and not ready for such a deployment, as shall be examined.

Another trend is seen emerging here as well: that of utilizing religion for political purposes, which hitherto had been considered unacceptable due to its incompatibility with secularism, one of the "six arrows". The war in Korea gave the regime an opportunity to change this, although the initial intentionality could be debated. On 26 August 1950, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki declared that, "The

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<sup>149</sup> Ruscuklu, Bulent. Kore Savasi: Unutulan Savas ve Gazi Faruk Pekerol'un Anilari. Istanbul: Melisa Matbaacilik, 2005. xviii.

strongest weapon against communism is the power of faith and spirituality. It is impossible for a true believer to combine communist ideas and religion”<sup>150</sup>. Later, the Ministry of Religious Affairs declared the Korean deployment a “jihad,” declaring that those who died in Korea would be considered “martyrs” of the faith.<sup>151</sup> This pacified any objections within the armed forces for the time being, although the outcomes from such religious reaction would in time cause great unrest among the secular military, which would make an extra incentive to take action of 27 May 1960.

Those against the decision to go to war were accused of being communist. The most active non-political group against the Korean involvement was an international anti-war organization, the “Peace Lovers Association”, the headquarters of which was located in Sweden. In Turkey, local Turks established a very active chapter of this organization in Istanbul. In a proclamation they announced, the group published a statement against the war, which was distributed to the public; however, copies of this declaration was banned by the regime and collected. In response, the group telegraphed their protest to members of parliament.<sup>152</sup> In the statement, they noted that the decision made by the regime was against the Turkish Constitution and the United Nations Charter; as the decision calling for troops to be sent abroad constituted a decision for war, the procedures had been unconstitutional. They also called for following in the footsteps of the government of India, which had “taken steps towards peace” and stopping the war by non-aggressive behavior that would lead towards world peace. Finally, they called for this decision to

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<sup>150</sup> Cumhuriyet 26 August 1950

<sup>151</sup> İlahiyat Kultur Telifler Basım ve Yayım Kurumu, Kore Savunmasına Katılmamızda Dini ve Siyasi Zaruret (İstanbul 1950) p. 13-14

<sup>152</sup> Metin Toker 82. Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşalı Yılları, DP’nin Altın Yılları Bilgi yayınları İstanbul 1990

send troops to be cancelled, and that the Grand National Assembly be convened in an emergency session to reach a democratic and legitimate decision.<sup>153</sup>

The government's response was harsh; Prime Minister Menderes stated in a press conference that, "this organization is known to have international roots. [...] Some individuals have hidden agendas to engage in activities harmful for our country. [...] In these dangerous times, we shall prevent actions that intend to harm [the people]." <sup>154</sup> In a less delicate manner, Fuat Koprulu called the organization's message, "complete communist propaganda," <sup>155</sup> while a newspaper columnist called them "Red agents" <sup>156</sup>. Consequently, the top leaders of the "Peace Lover's Association" were arrested on 2 August 1950 for, "concretely acting in a manner against national interests and attempting to inflict harm on national unity" <sup>157</sup>. The organization was shut down, with six of its top leaders initially sentenced to jail for three years and nine months <sup>158</sup>; however, after a successful appeal, the accused were set free. <sup>159</sup> Considering what was going on in the United States at the time, with the Red Scare and McCarthyism, this was not too bad; however, any anti-war opposition was nipped in the bud. In addition, while this was quite mild actually in context, an important anti-democratic trend would emerge here that would flower throughout the decade of the 1950s; the regime decided at some point that labeling someone a communist was a very useful weapon against any political opposition

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<sup>153</sup> Zafer, 29 July 1950.

<sup>154</sup> Ayin Tarihi, p. 200 (temmuz 1950) s. 73-74

<sup>155</sup> Cumhuriyet 31 July 1950

<sup>156</sup> Milliyet 2 August 1950

<sup>157</sup> Milliyet 2 August 1950

<sup>158</sup> Cumhuriyet 31 December 1950.

<sup>159</sup> Cumhuriyet, 8 November 1951.

against the Democrat Party. At the very end, this would contribute significantly to the regime's downfall.

### CHAPTER 3

#### **The Forgotten War's Forgotten Brigades**

*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*

-Horace, *Odes* (Book III, 2.13)

Regarding the Turkish Brigades in Korea, the most written on them is their performance. To start out, however, it must be noted that the accounts differ depending on the source; the Turkish press and history books describe them as civilized soldiers, renowned for their unparalleled bravery and humanitarian behavior, while Western accounts tend to depict the Turks as savage barbarians, although their courage is held up as exemplary. It must be concluded that both of these perspectives are by themselves exaggerative; it is simply the case that both Western and Turkish accounts emphasize what they believe is most appealing to the public. For the purposes of this paper, what interests us is how the experiences of these soldiers had an impact on Turkey. As it shall be examined, everything from the personal experiences of soldiers in Korea to the manner in which they were portrayed would have enormous repercussions.

As mentioned earlier, the Turkish military in 1950 was in an unenviable position. Interestingly enough, it was at the same meeting that Fuat Koprulu delivered his opinion that the Turkey was not being directly threatened by the events going on in Korea that McBride conveyed his assessment of the Turkish military: "conditions of the Turkish Forces could be considered alarming as there were no units in the Turkish Military forces

that were capable of taking the field and making a creditable performance in combat.”<sup>160</sup>

While such military capacity had prevented Turkey from entering the Second World War, the current Turkish leadership didn't seem to think this mattered. Only three years ago US Secretary of War Patterson had called the Turkish military, “What you might call a 1910 army.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, as concluded in the previous chapter, the United States sought to gain Turkish troops more so due to political rather than combat purposes. Indeed, besides giving the United States a chance to measure Turkey's commitment to its alignment with the West, the sending of Turkish troops also certainly was meant in the larger picture to serve as an example meant to rally more countries behind the US-led “free world”.

Indeed, the United States had tried very hard to convince India to send troops to Korea as well, due to the symbolic nature of this country.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, as a neutral, non-aligned nation, recently out of the grasp of colonial rule, with the monumental struggle against the British still in the minds of everybody, India had a large clout at the time within the Third World. It can thus be deduced that the United States hoped that Turkey would provide similar symbolic qualities for the US-led coalition; the goal would be to prevent the perception that the intervention in Korea was an imperialist action undertaken by the “old boys club” of European colonial powers.

While talk is cheap, action is not. The Turkish military was not ready for modern warfare. It is true that military reforms were being undertaken in response to the “alarming” situation the army was in: “The overall size of the army was trimmed down from 700,000 to 400,000 men, officers and NCOs were sent abroad for training, and a

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<sup>160</sup> FRUS 1950 Volume V, 1275-1276.

<sup>161</sup> Huston 191.

<sup>162</sup> File: Korean War, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library.

new Personnel Section was set up in the General Staff, with a view to making promotions dependent on training and proven ability, rather than pure seniority.”<sup>163</sup> Besides this, “the United States began to pour new equipment – artillery, trucks, tanks and fighter aircraft – which were designed to help Turkey to fulfill her commitments to the Western alliance.”<sup>164</sup> Still, the conditions were not ready, as these new rules could not be implemented fully overnight.

Promotion had hitherto been achieved via seniority rather than ability, and the senior ranks of the army were consequently, “over-staffed and filled with men with virtually no training in modern warfare”<sup>165</sup>, while the new equipment was nice on paper, but would actually cause a bottleneck in delivery and training due to the lack of capability within the fossilized senior ranks.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, the background of the commander of the First Turkish Brigade itself, General Tahsin Yazici, best illustrates this situation. He had served as a divisional commander at Gallipoli in 1916 during World War One; in fact he was in fact so high up the ranks that he voluntarily demoted himself to take the post.<sup>167</sup> What also must be mentioned is that less than a month ago, as mentioned earlier, the top ranks of the armed forces had been purged and newly replaced with other very senior officers; therefore, it should not come as too surprising that the armed forces had no objection to this deployment. It was adequately clear, however, that the lower ranks, “strongly resented the dominance of its authoritarian and conservative

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<sup>163</sup> Hale Military 96-97

<sup>164</sup> Ibid 96.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid 88-113.

<sup>166</sup> Huston 193.

<sup>167</sup> Blair, Clay. The Forgotten War. New York: Times Books, 1987. 451.

commanders.”<sup>168</sup> The Korean War would serve to exacerbate this divide between the “old guard” and reformist, young officers, who would end up becoming revolutionaries.

While trimming the size of the army had helped a bit, the fundamental structure of the army itself had its drawbacks; the Turkish army at the time was – and still is – conscript based, due to engrained military culture that exists in Turkey. The only reform made in this regard was that years of service had been reduced from three to two. While such a form of military service certainly is good for promoting patriotism and values of the state among the general public, it also meant that the amount of competent professional, long-term staff were few in numbers, which would lead to problems, along with all of these other issues, in Korea and its aftermath.

### **The Horror of War**

The details of the deployment to Korea are irrelevant for this paper, and have been already described in depth elsewhere; we are interested in the impact.<sup>169</sup> What must be remembered is that the soldiers Turkey sent to Korea were part of a citizen army, not a professional, private, voluntary force. Many sources tend to depict the composition of the brigades as being completely voluntary, which is simply incorrect.<sup>170</sup> While it is true that many volunteered for service, the Turkish Brigades were composed mainly of conscripts serving the mandatory two-year period of duty required of all male citizens at the time.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, although the majority of officers and specialists sent over were volunteers, and all soldiers sent over went through rigorous physical examination before

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<sup>168</sup> Hale Military. 97.

<sup>169</sup> Denizli, Ali.

<sup>170</sup> Turkmen, Fusun. Turkey and the Korean War; Hale, William. Military.

<sup>171</sup> Interviews conducted with Metin Ozcan, Rifat Karamursel, Mehmet Aziz Erkmen, Muzaffer Eren; Denizli, Ali Kore’de Turk Tugayleri.



being sent out, the brigades sent to Korea was a civilian army. They left families behind, who although publicly supported the war, were unsure of completely where their sons and husbands were headed off, and shed tears after their loved ones when they left.<sup>172</sup>

Mr. Mehmet Aziz Erkmen, who served as a private in Korea from 1950-1951 with the First Turkish Brigade was one of those in this initial deployment.<sup>173</sup> Like most who would serve in this outfit, and most of the Turkish public, he did not know where Korea was when first informed his unit would be shipped out there: “I had no idea which end of the world we were headed off to. But we were told that we were needed there to defend the fatherland. [...] In all honesty, most of us didn’t expect to return. [...] Still, we were eager and proud to be given a chance to show the world our mettle.”<sup>174</sup> Similarly, Yusuf Sabanoglu, who served in Korea with the Third Turkish Brigade from 1952 to 1953, was enthusiastic, like most soldiers, to join the fight; he personally was a career officer, and therefore his order to ship out was met with personal enthusiasm: “At the time the Korean War began I was a cadet at the Infantry School. I was trained for war, and therefore the orders I received and my personal enthusiasm in going to war merged”. Still, he admits that although he had followed the news closely on the Korean War “I did know about Korea; however, when I actually arrived in Korea I found out that I knew absolutely nothing.”<sup>175</sup> Indeed, most Turkish soldiers who served in Korea would come to learn the dear price of glory.

The Battle of Kunuri was the baptism of fire for the Turkish Brigade; taking place between 26 and 30 November 1950, just as the Turkish Parliament was debating the

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<sup>172</sup> Sabanoglu, Yusuf.

<sup>173</sup> Interview January 2008.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Interview January 2008 Yusuf Sabanoglu.

decision to send troops to Korea and vote on it, the Turkish forces faced invading Chinese forces, in an action that would make the Turkish Brigade internationally famous. From the reserve of the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Eighth United States Army, as a result of the disastrous invasion of North Korea by General MacArthur resulting in the intervention of hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops, the Turks were now at the front. They stood their ground, buying the US forces “three golden days” to successfully withdraw and regroup.<sup>176</sup> General Walker, commander of the Eighth, would announce the Turkish Brigade, by putting up a fierce resistance, had possibly saved his army from annihilation;<sup>177</sup> however, the price paid by the Turks for glory was dear. Mr. Erkmen remembers:

I was terrified. But I had grown up in a household in which my father had fought at Gallipoli, and my family struggled during the War of Independence. I had promised my family I would not let them down. So – keep in mind I am in a trench with bullets and shells flying all around us – I decided I was not able to see the enemy well enough to aim at them. So I did something out of sheer stupidity – I got out of the trench, because I thought I would be able to aim better, and opened fire from a prone position. Keep in mind, we have been encircled, the Chinese are pouring in from the hills, from all around us. Bullets are flying by me – my friends are being martyred. But I am not noticing this at the time, I am not thinking of this. All that I remember thinking was that I simply did not want us Turks to look cowardly in front of the Americans. At this point I saw another figure, who must have been as stupid as I was, who got out of the trench and started opening fire from an uncovered position as well.

The brigade was encircled by Chinese forces at Kunuri, and had to fight bitterly to get out of this death trap. Overall, it was a very bloody affair, costing the brigade 218 KIA, 94 MIA, and 455 WIA.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Roy E. Appleman, *Disaster in Korea: The Chinese confront MacArthur* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989.

<sup>177</sup> Yazici, 240.

<sup>178</sup> *Kore Harbinde Turk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin Muharebeleri (1950-1953)*, 137.

The perception of this event internationally and by the Turks demonstrates best the different viewpoint both sides would have. In the analysis of Gavin D. Brockett, “following the failed United Nations offensive towards the Yalu River, the international media were searching for something positive on which to report and it would appear that Turkish feats of bravery at Kunu-ri – regardless of the ultimate near decimation of the Turkish Brigade – provided exactly what they needed”<sup>179</sup>. Indeed, the statement given by General Walker, Commander of the Eighth Army confirmed this glory: “The heroic soldiers of a heroic nation, you have saved the Eighth Army and the IX'th Army Corps from encirclement and the 2nd Division from destruction. I came here today to thank you on behalf of the United Nations Army.”<sup>180</sup> News reports around the world reported of this victory, and in Turkey, where the sensationalist press had already been depicting the role of the Turkish Brigade in an overly exaggerated manner, the comments by American commanders and politicians and favorable international press reports only seemed to confirm the image being presented by the Turkish media to the public. This battle would forge a legend of the Turks in Korea, and engrain it within the Turkish national identity, as argued by Brockett; the Turkish public would believe that it had saved the UN war effort in Korea. In the words of General Tahsin Yazici, from his memoir:

[If the Turks had not rescued the American forces from destruction by the Chinese], such a calamity could have led to the collapse of the political and military influence, the honor and personality of the United Nations community and of its pillar, the United States. It would have led to the possibility that Korea would have been completely lost, and subsequently to the victory of Communism. [...] The world of today would be a different shape and color.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Brockett, Gavin D. ‘The Turk’ in the Korean War and Turkish National Identity.

<sup>180</sup> Yazici 240.

<sup>181</sup> Yazici; Brockett 115.

Thus, the public would come to expect a reciprocal response from her ally, the United States, which Turkey had saved, to come to her aid when in need; the perception that the Americans did not return in kind, and “abandoned” Turkey in the post-Korea years would cause the emergence of a bitterness that has pervaded and grown until today, exacerbated especially by the 1964 Johnson letter crisis over Cyprus. On the other hand, the American public would virtually forget this contribution altogether; in historical accounts, the Turks are either left out or mentioned in passing. They are noted especially in T.R. Fehrenbach’s account of the Korean War, This Kind of War, which gives us the general idea of how these accounts go overall: he describes the Turks as having admirable qualities as a soldier, but otherwise being “ignorant barbarians”.<sup>182</sup>

Interestingly enough, the overall impression left is that Turks, while they are admirable fighters, are besides that a people that should clearly be steered far away from unless necessary. Indeed, there was certainly some rational basis for this; the Turks were known for their fierceness and atrocities they committed. For example, one of the popular stories goes that: “Certain Turkish patrols always reported high body counts when they returned from patrols. Headquarters always scoffed at the high numbers, much higher in fact than any other unit, until the Turks decided to bring the enemy bodies back and dump them at headquarters for the body count.”<sup>183</sup> In the long term, it would be only images such as these that would remain; instead of the Turks receiving a new image thanks to this contribution, instead previous Orientalist stereotypes of the “Terrible Turk” would be reinforced by the imagery presented to the American public; in reality, the

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<sup>182</sup> Fehrenbach, This Kind of War. 543-544.

<sup>183</sup> [http://www.historynet.com/magazines/military\\_history/3030651.html?page=4&c=y](http://www.historynet.com/magazines/military_history/3030651.html?page=4&c=y)

Turks were no less savage than the American troops in Korea, nor any less human. The media, on the other hand, chose to create an icon out of the Turks; as such, while for the short term this image proved to be useful for the Republic of Turkey's interests, in the long run the depiction of the Turks as such an icon made it easier "otherize" and remove the humanity and sympathy when dealing with them in the future.

On 9 December 1950, Fuat Koprulu contacted Ambassador Wadsworth, stating that "[Turkey] is proud of [the] contribution its brigade has made towards such resistance in Korea"<sup>184</sup>. Indeed, the Turkish Brigade would go on to receive many citations within the next three years from the United States, the Republic of Korea, and United Nations, including the US Presidential Unit Citation in 1951; Turkey being allowed into NATO was hastened, and received a lot more economic and military aid. Yet is it worth the human cost inflicted? Reflecting on his experiences overall, Mr. Erkmen notes that, "At the time I was there, we had no front line. We were in constant movement, and wherever our forces moved, the civilian population retreated with us. You should have seen them – they were very poor, and seeing human beings in such horrific conditions broke our hearts. And the children..." suddenly, he stops and starts trembling. "We saw horrible things there."<sup>185</sup>

### **The impact on Turkish soldiers**

Overall, Turkish soldiers came back to their homeland completely transformed by this experience. They were greeted by cheering crowds as conquering heroes, but after all the fanfare and celebration, most of them had to return back to civilian lives.

According to a recent study completed, studying the psychological effects of the war on

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<sup>184</sup> FRUS Vol. V

<sup>185</sup> Interview, January 2008.

Turkish Korean War veterans, “Although Korean veterans were on duty for only one year, the impact on their lives has been felt throughout their lives. For some, this lasted three to four months; however, the vast majority has been unable to shake off the effects of the war for the rest of their lives”<sup>186</sup>. Yet the impact went beyond the human cost for Turkey; it must be remembered that never before had such a large number of soldiers left the country, in such diverse rank, in Turkish history. There were bound to be major consequences.

For officers who served in Korea, the experience caused much resentment and radicalization; by all means, what they had learned by getting posted overseas went beyond technical and professional experience. They had seen the ineptitude among the “old guard” of the armed forces, and realized that something needed to change regarding this situation, as it was not only keeping them back, but such ineptitude presented danger if Turkey actually had to go to war. For example, in an interview with Rifat Karamursel, veteran from the Second Turkish Brigade, he remembers one instance where as a private he was operating a listening post by himself, while his superior in charge of operating the machinery, a captain, did not know how to use it; a passing American general noted that according to regulations it was necessary to at least be an NCO to operate such machinery, and he was subsequently promoted.

This instance, however, reveals the depth of such incompetence among senior ranking officers. Indeed, this marked difference between the “new” and “old” within the armed forces, exacerbated by frustration on part of the former, would lead to a deep split within the military that would last through the coup d’etat of 27 May 1960, arguably up

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<sup>186</sup> Oh, Jin H. An Anthropological Approach to the Korean War, Korea, and the Korean War Based on Memories of the War. Ankara: Hacettepe Universitesi, 2002. 56.

until today; while it was the reformist branch that carried out the revolution, with instances of cadets and NCOs arresting colonels and generals, it is clear that the coup was meant to be not only Menderes's government, but the *ancien regime* overall. At the end, however, the old guard would establish its dominance by virtually sending into exile those associated with the more radical branch, including Alparslan Turkes, who would be posted to the Turkish embassy in India. A failed putsch led by another young officer in 1962 would demonstrate simply how deep this divide had become. Indeed, the Ergenekon investigation currently taking place in Turkey, which started with a string of arrests in January 2008, concerning a radical nationalist group consisting of bureaucrats, military, and terrorist elements that were planning a coup that would have taken place in 2009 reveals simply how long this trend that started in Korea lasted. Indeed, the fact that simultaneously Turkish officers were being trained abroad in other places as well exacerbated this divide; however, Korea by far received the most volume and diversity.

Another issue that came up was regarding how the American soldiers were treated in comparison to their Turkish counterparts. To start out with the most basic issue, the pay difference between them and American soldiers was obvious; the base pay for Turks started at \$5 a month, while for the American private it was fifteen times that amount. Besides this, Turkish officers unconsciously or consciously, were being indoctrinated with American values; they admired the Americans for the manner in which they conducted their business. For example, Mr. Sabanoglu notes that he was very impressed with the value American officers attached to the lives of their soldiers:

For Americans, the acceptable loss rate in an attack was calculated to be one percent maximum; for our officers, up to ten percent was considered acceptable. In this one case, they planned for hours this one attack against a hill, which was so carefully planned that it resulted in no casualties for

the Americans. If it was our troops charging up that hill, we would certainly have taken a much shorter time, but would have been inflicted casualties. Such actions in part of Americans made me respect them a lot.<sup>187</sup>

Indeed, a future leader of Turkey who served in Korea from 1958 to 1959, President Kenan Evren, who took power through a coup d'état in 1980, also noted such admiration for American values and institutions in his memoirs;<sup>188</sup> it should come as little surprise that he would attempt to force change in Turkey in such a direction, believing that this was the only solution for the country's problems.

Thus, while grievances had started building up in Turkey, officers were now able to compare their relative situation in the world; and what they saw, they did not like. The Korean War also naturally made Turkey's commitment in the Cold War unquestionable; in post-27 May, when a trial was launched against the overthrown regime, among all the numerous charges against the Democrats, not once was Turkey's commitment in Korea questioned, although it had perhaps been one of the most controversial decisions made by the Democrats. Mr. Apaydin considers the reasons for this: "They attacked my client for the most farcical charges, including a charge that he supposedly had a child out of wedlock; however, they never brought up the question of Korea. Now that would have undermined the very foundation on top of which the military regime stood as well."<sup>189</sup> Yet while the young officers admired the United States, they also felt like the sovereignty of their country was being removed from their hands, as they felt insulted for being subordinated to US officers in Korea and Turkey itself. For example, Mr. Sabanoglu recalls that the most painful part of being in Korea was that he was forced to shed his

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<sup>187</sup> Interview January 2008

<sup>188</sup> Kenan Evrenin Anilari, Cilt I.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Burhan Apaydin, January 2008.



own country's uniform for that of the United States.<sup>190</sup> He recalls that the only thing that physically differentiated Turkish soldiers from American troops was the crescent patch on their shoulders, which in one case led to him mistaking another Turkish translator for being an American, and thus conversing with him for hours in English until realizing that the soldier was a fellow countryman.<sup>191</sup>

Such comical instances aside, however, as argued by Vander Lippe, as a result of their experience in Korea and at home, due to the arrival of thousands of military advisers, "Turks had a dual vision of America. On the one hand the Turks admired America's wealth and technological sophistication, but on the other hand they resented American attitudes of superiority and condescension."<sup>192</sup> As remembered by Kenan Evren:

[In Turkey], American assistance and training teams were down to Divisional level, and they started to interfere in all of our business. We weren't angered at the fact that we were being taught new methods by them, but we couldn't stand that they would not trust us, such as with the maintenance of vehicles and gear, and felt condescended. There was nothing we could do.<sup>193</sup>

The Turkish troops in Korea, as a result of their interactions with Americans, were able to see the obvious lag their country was experiencing, and felt like they would be able to change things: "The result had been aptly described as 'a revolution of rising frustrations'."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Interview with Yusuf Sabanoglu, January 2008.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Vander Lippe, John M. Forgotten brigade of the forgotten war: Turkey's participation in the Korean War. Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 2000. London: Frank Cass. 92-102.

<sup>193</sup> (87-88; Kenan Evren'in Anilari, 1990, Milliyet Yayinlari, Istanbul)

<sup>194</sup> Hale Military 98.

On the other hand, Turkish soldiers who fought in Korea did not feel like they received the respect they deserved from their American counterparts, and were incensed by the refusal to be treated as equals; as a result they felt used. This is evident in a joke told by Turkish soldiers, in which soldiers are informed that they shall be parachuted behind enemy lines. The Turkish officer informs them that parachutes given by Americans shall be smaller than usual, because they shall be flying in low. A soldier pipes up at hearing this, saying, “Oh really, they’re going to let us have parachutes?”<sup>195</sup> The pay difference, the philosophy and wealth of Americans, combined with the feeling of not being given a fair share they deserved both from the Americans and from their own government caused the lower ranks of the Turkish officer corps to become radicalized. Indeed, the Turkish government, although praising the actions of its soldiers in Korea, never awarded them any medals, while the conditions for those who remained in the military deteriorated, with the government insulting the officers repeatedly through its actions. Eventually, those who served in Korea would be some of the first to form underground organizations to overthrow the regime, starting in 1954; they would include Faruk Guventurk and Suphi Gursoytrak the former being the original creator of the revolutionary cells that would overthrow the government on 27 May 1960. Even though Guventurk himself would be arrested in December 1957 for plotting against the government, the revolution for which the groundwork he laid would succeed.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, while it could be said that Korea was a public relations operation to validate regime’s ties to US and commitment to defend Turkey, the results would come back to haunt those who had made the decision to send the troops in the first place.

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<sup>195</sup> Vander Lippe 99.

<sup>196</sup> Birand 112-119.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Domino Effect

*Democracy is a political system that is based on numbers. By this system the wishes of the people, the national will, is carried out. We, as the responsible leaders in power, are obliged to take into consideration the wishes of the masses and not the outbursts and criticisms of a handful of intellectuals.*<sup>197</sup>

Samet Agaoglu, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey (1950-1954)

### The Domestic Impact

Via the troop deployment to Korea, the objectives of the Menderes government had been to domestically consolidate its power position and join NATO. When the guns fell silent across the Korean Peninsula on 27 July 1953, it is clear that these goals had been realized. Within this three-year time span Turkey became a full member of NATO and received massive quantities of military and economic aid from the United States. At the same time, the war rallied the public behind the Democrat Party, and the economic successes that would result from aid that became available due to the commitment to Korea bolstered further Menderes and his regime. All this further diminished the Republican People's Party, as the 1954 general elections demonstrate, in which the RPP won only 31 seats to the DP's 502. The same year this election took place, however, would be the high mark for Menderes and his party. From this point on, it would be downhill.

The economy, which the Democrat Party had shown attention to, had been fired up by economic aid received as a result of the Korean War. By 1952, Turkey has received over a billion dollars in aid, and \$100 million a year in economic aid alone.<sup>198</sup> It is clear

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<sup>197</sup> Yalman, Ahmet Emin. *Yakin Tarihimizde Gorduklerimiz ve Gecirdiklerimiz*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Yenilik Basimevi, 1971. 238-9.

<sup>198</sup> FRUS 1952-1954. Vol VIII. 875.

that the administration wanted Turkey to follow America's model in achieving prosperity; they would repeatedly affirm that Turkey would become a "small America" under the leadership of the Democrats. In a speech on 20 April 1954, Celal Bayar would state: "Our economic situation today, our international standing, and our national cooperation and unity makes us conclude that Turkey shall, at most in thirty years – and perhaps in less time – become a United States of America with a population between thirty and fifty million."<sup>199</sup> Indeed, during the Korean War, Turkey's economy appeared to boom miraculously, although it had actually been subsidized by the United States, foreign loans, and depleting the Turkish gold reserves; needless to say, this was a very different approach than that taken by the statist policies of the past two decades. It did appear to work, however, as national income increased 40% between 1950 and 1953, and Turkey became the third largest wheat exporter in the world, which was attributed to the massive import of tractors by the government and the success of multi-party politics.<sup>200</sup> As it turns out, the excellent results had been more in part due to three good harvest seasons in a row rather than this advance in technology; indeed, the problem quickly became that Turkey simply didn't have the means to absorb all of this modernization at the same time, which was being experienced both civilian and military realms. By 1954, economic growth stopped, and the inflation rate, along with national debts, began rising. The Democrats, counting on the United States to bail them out, were disappointed that this never happened; however, the United States clearly understood Turkey's importance to the security of the United States, as noted by President Eisenhower on 5 January 1955

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<sup>199</sup> Celal Bayar'in soylev ve demecleri Speech at expansion of Merinos textile factory, Bursa, April 20, 1954

<sup>200</sup> Hale Military 94.

at a private meeting of the National Security Council: “US economic assistance to Turkey [is] the best possible way to buttress our security interests in the Near Eastern area.

Moreover, it was much better and cheaper to assist the Turks to build up their own armed forces than to create additional US divisions.”<sup>201</sup> As a result, the aid level was increased, but only enough for Turkey to “keep its neck above the water”<sup>202</sup>. At the same time, Menderes made it clear to the United States that Turkey would keep on sending troops to Korea, although making it clear that this was dependent on aid given to Turkey.<sup>203</sup> Thus, it seems fairly obvious that the seven brigades sent after the fighting ended in 1953 was consciously meant to be a political bargaining chip for Turkey, or more specifically, the Democrats. Eventually, the United States government would grow increasingly weary about bailing Turkey out: “many officials in Washington are asking: “What good is a bankrupt ally?”<sup>204</sup> They would not object much when the regime came tumbling down on 27 May 1960.

The military was clearly upset with the economic situation; their pay was fixed, and inflation running high clearly did not help them. The question was not about the money; rather, it was a question of pride. Along with government workers and academics, the military was, “stripped of the one thing that had kept them proud throughout the years – self-respect and pride at being the most advanced sector of the population”<sup>205</sup>. Such comments by Menderes as “I can run this army with NCOs,” did not help his standing much among officers either; even though they disapproved of the

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<sup>201</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, vol. VIII pp 865.

<sup>202</sup> FRUS 1958-1960.

<sup>203</sup> FRUS 1955-1957.

<sup>204</sup> FRUS 13 Jan 1956 – Briefing on Turkey at American Embassy in Ankara – p. 659-

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<sup>205</sup> Hale Military 99

upper ranks of the army, such insulting statements towards the military was offending to all ranks. The manner in which the DP was running the state's economy into the ground, along with the social reforms of Ataturk, was of major concern to those within the military as well. The other problem was the increasingly authoritarian trends growing within the Democrat Party, and its aggression that went beyond debate towards the RPP. Besides at one point shutting down *Ulus*, the party's media outlet, and seizing most of the RPP's financial assets, launched personal attacks on Inonu and those who supported his party; for example, one of the provinces that had supported Inonu in the 1954 elections, Malatya, was split into two.<sup>206</sup> As a result, starting in 1954, an underground movement would begin within the military itself; not from the top, which was subordinated to Menderes successfully, but from the lower ranks. It would not take long for the lower ranks to ignore orders given by commanding officers, who were threatened and rendered helpless by subordination.<sup>207</sup> On the other hand, the civilian population would come to see the military as the only credible institution within this time period as well, with the DP turning ever more autocratic, the RPP being castrated further every day, and the country entering a spiral of political crises, economic instability, and debt.

In order to retain its voting base, the Democrat Party turned its attention from economics to other areas, such as foreign policy. Turkey would get involved in bitter conflict over the independence of Cyprus; the government, especially Menderes, would make anti-Greek speeches, rousing nationalist and religious strains within the public. Doing so clearly broke from the precedent of pursuing a friendly dialogue with Greece and neighbors, not to mention keeping things secular; starting with Korea, religion,

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<sup>206</sup> Birand 109.

<sup>207</sup> Birand 179.

nationalism, and foreign policy were now being used for domestic political purposes. The results would be horrific. Although it remains fully unclear if the government directly sponsored it, between 6 and 7 September 1955, a frenzied Turkish mob, clearly centrally coordinated, rampaged through Istanbul, attacking the Greek minority inhabiting the city, looting and destroying their property, and burning churches; the army was sent in to quell the disorder, but it was too late. The minorities in Turkey, who were at this point integrated into the social fabric of the Republic, and had fought in Korea as members of the Turkish Brigade, no longer felt welcome. The result was, besides a massive exodus abroad of the remaining Greeks in Istanbul, a fiasco for the government, which promptly fell. Menderes was the only one who survived this political disaster among his cabinet. Fuat Koprulu, disgusted by his colleague's tactics, resigned and abandoned the Democrat Party.

From this point onward, Menderes started an "agressive strategy". On 10 November 1956, he announced in a speech in Gaziantep: "Communist infiltrators are in movement among us. For these revolutionary actions to end, if the law is not enough, then I shall bring about new laws"<sup>208</sup>. As observed earlier, during the Korean War this trend of accusing those opposed to the regime as being "communist", such as the "Peace Lover's Association"; starting then, the culmination was this. The immediate result was the "Press Law", which was in response to the press turning against his party. The press had been not controlled since 1946, and this caused disquiet among various sectors of society, especially university students and academics, who immediately protested this decision. The 1957 elections showed a precipitous drop in the support of the Democrats

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<sup>208</sup> Birand 133.

as a result of these aforementioned factors; the RPP's seat number rose to 178, while the DP went down to 424. In 1958, a coup in Iraq clearly shook Menderes, who learned that his close ally King Faisal had been deposed and executed; this convinced him to make his attacks less vicious. Yet on 17 February 1959, an incredible event turned the tide for Menderes. While landing at Gatwick Airport in London, his plane crashed, killing most on board; however, Menderes survived. This was perceived as an "act of God", or at least was colored to look so, and this gave a massive boost to his ratings and confidence. This would give him an opportunity to go on a final offensive against the RPP one last time, utilizing religion more than ever for political purposes. Already uneasy about the regime's lax approach towards supporting religion, defending itself by claiming religion was a weapon to combat communism, an idea that took roots in Turkey during the Korean War, he initially had been able to quell opposition; however, as time went on, this would turn those who supported secularism, especially those within the state bureaucracy, military, and academics, against the regime, creating a rallying flag.

On 29 April 1959, a group of demonstrators attacked Inonu while he was giving a speech at Usak, with a stone hitting his head; the fact that he had commanded the defense of this city personally during the War of Independence against the Greeks, and that his popularity was very high in this town raised questions. Next, he was attacked by a mob at Topkapi, Istanbul, where nearby military units by chance noticed this demonstration and saved him from lynching. Events that took place at Kayseri, however, demonstrated clearly for the first time that the army was starting to put its hand into political affairs, and turning against the government; army units ordered by the local governor to block



Inonu's path to the city, instead of stopping him, stood at attention as he walked by.<sup>209</sup> In response to such undemocratic activity, he stated that, "when conditions are appropriate, it is the right of a people to revolt"<sup>210</sup>. While clearly Inonu was not pulling the strings for the impending revolution, he certainly knew that if Menderes did not stop, "I shall not be able to save you from what is transpiring".<sup>211</sup> On 18 April 1960, the final blow came when the government created a commission to investigate the RPP, supposedly for "creating illegal cell organizations, arming itself, and preparing for open rebellion"<sup>212</sup>.

This is when all hell broke loose; protests would take place across the country, first in universities, then flooding into the streets. Police were ordered to open fire on crowds gathered in Beyazit Square in Istanbul on 28 April 1960, killing one and injuring 40 people, mostly students. Then, a large demonstration took place on 5 May 1960 at Kizilay Square in Ankara. When the Prime Minister emerged to calm the demonstrators with his charisma, he ended up in a fistfight; returning to his office, he ordered police to open fire on demonstrators if they did not disperse; this order was never obeyed. On 15 May, for the first time since 1908, uniformed soldiers joined the ranks of the civilians in protesting the government on the streets. Still, affirmed by senior generals, who at this point were not in control any longer although perhaps they had such an illusion, Menderes was confident that the army overall was with him. On 25 May 1950, to save the regime a drastic measure was proposed by President Celal Bayar and the Chief of the General Staff Rustu Erdelhun: martial law, dissolving the RPP, and a part-military

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<sup>209</sup> Birand 160-162.

<sup>210</sup> Birand 191.

<sup>211</sup> Hale, Military.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid 165.

government; in other words, a dictatorship.<sup>213</sup> On 27 May 1960, the final domino would fall in a sequence that had started when the DP leadership decided to send troops to Korea.

### **Impact on Foreign Policy**

In the short term, the greatest winners of the Korean War in this case studied were the Democrat Party and United States. Both parties achieved their goals, and beyond. Not only was Turkey's independence, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty ensured; this commitment marked a beginning of Turkey being a firm ally of the United States. The alliance would last throughout the Cold War, and from the perception of the governments of the Republic of Turkey and United States, this would block any attempts at Soviet expansion into the Middle East for the remainder of the Cold War. Turkey would be very actively regarding foreign policy in years to come; besides the already active Treaty of Mutual Assistance, which had been signed into effect on 1939, between the United Kingdom, France and Turkey, and joining NATO on February 18, 1952, Turkey entered a string of other US-approved alliances. On September 28, 1952, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia was signed. In 1954, a Mutual Security Agreement was signed with Pakistan, and the Treaty of Bled, a military alliance between Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia, went into effect. Besides this, in 1955, the Baghdad Pact went into effect, known as CENTO after Iraq dropped out due to a revolution in 1958. In addition, Turkey received billions of dollars in aid from the United States, which it still does today.

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<sup>213</sup> Birand 183,

On the other hand, the situation created would turn out to be harmful for all parties involved in the long run. Things got a lot worse with the Soviet Union; when after Stalin's death, the Soviet Union attempted to apologize and stabilize relations with Turkey, they faced an immediate rebuke. Turkey now was committed by the bond of blood to fighting the Cold War on the side of the Americans; only gradually, in the détente years was able to normalize relations with the Soviets once again. While joining NATO might have created a certainty that Turkey stood not alone in the world, it also meant certain commitments, including exposure to danger. Especially the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 clearly demonstrated to the Turkish public that in the case that the United States or NATO went to war with the Soviet Union for whatever reason, Turkey would be willingly or unwillingly dragged into a conflict that would with little doubt have resulted in wide-scale destruction, if not annihilation. To make matters worse, in 1964 the United States would make it very clear that the relationship between both countries was far from mutual but rather one in which Turkey was subordinate.

Regarding a conflict over Cyprus in that year, as the Turkish armed forces prepared to land on the island, Prime Minister Inonu (again in power) received a letter from President Johnson, warning him that he could not guarantee American support if a Turkish invasion of Cyprus led to a Soviet attack on Turkey, going on to state that, "I must tell you in all candor that the United States cannot agree to the use of any United States supplied military equipment for a Turkish intervention in Cyprus under present circumstances".<sup>214</sup> This letter, which would later be referred to by American diplomat George Ball as, "the most brutal diplomatic note" he had ever seen, would cause a

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<sup>214</sup> Harris, George S. Troubled Alliance. Washington, DC: American Enterprise for Public Policy Research, 1972. 114-116

permanent scar on Turkish-American relations, leading to many within the Turkish public and government questioning the benefits to Turkey of its policy of complete compliance with the United States and its membership in NATO.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the goal of the government of the Republic of Turkey had clearly been to assert independence and national sovereignty. Did sending troops to Korea accomplish these goals? After carefully examining the results, it is clear that this is not the case. The contribution ended up in further dependence on the United States economically, politically, and militarily. Besides this, the war gave the Democrat Party a chance to exercise authoritarianism and silence its opposition, utilizing the combination of fear and popularity it gained through the war. Religion and nationalism was whipped up, leading to the unfortunate events of 6-7 September 1955. Finally, as a result, the military establishment ended up as the only credible institution due to the government's failures; viewing the government's actions as contrary to its own interests, that is defending Ataturk's revolutionary ideals, incensed by the treatment it received as a result of policies enacted by the Democrat Party, and having its eyes opened during the Korean War. The end result would be 27 May 1960.

### **EPILOGUE: The Steam**

*If this building [the state] falls down everything... including democracy, freedom of speech, human rights... gets crushed underneath. So the roof has to be strong - the army keeps an eye on it.*<sup>215</sup>

-Edib Baser, Retired Turkish general, 7 November 2006

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<sup>215</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6122878.stm>

This story began with a turning point, which we have arrived back to in the end. The manner in which the Korean War served as the catalyst, the effects of which culminated in a military intervention has been described; however, how does this relate to today? Indeed, Turkey's destiny has been shaped by the events that took place on that morning: the military forever entered the sphere of Turkish politics, and would not hesitate to step in when it felt necessary, as demonstrated by the subsequent military interventions in 1971, 1980, and 1997. It has been established that the Korean War helped the Turkish military gain this rear-guard role, a check within the political framework of Turkey, having the reputation of being the only credible institution. This resulted from a combination of the "pull" factors, including the military gaining prestige in its fighting role in Korea and the modernization of the military by the United States, and on the other hand the "push" provided by the Menderes government's ineptitude in governing the country and economic difficulties, due largely to being forced to keep a large mobilized army to meet its obligations to NATO. Thus, ironically, it can be said that Menderes dug himself into his own grave.

It is already an accepted factor that officers who were trained abroad in NATO scholarships initiated these coups<sup>216</sup>; however, Korea rather appears to be the main training grounds for ideologically shaping the officer corps, as soldiers being sent to other countries by no means reached the numbers and diversity of rank as in Korea, as discussed.<sup>217</sup> The war gave the young officers a chance to not only learn technical experience, but also were exposed to how far behind Turkey was behind her Western counterparts both in terms of the military and society, radicalizing while also making

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<sup>216</sup> Birand, Mehmet Ali. Demirkirat.

<sup>217</sup> Zurcher, *Modernlesen Turkiye* 340.

them pro-American; indeed, the camaraderie on the battlefield would a long way, manifesting itself in political terms. The most concrete example is that of General Kenan Evren, the leader of the coup d'état of 12 September 1980, who served in Korea between 1958 and 1959 as a young officer; indeed, it was in Korea that he would be indoctrinated with American values and ideals that later he would reflect during his presidency. It is clear today that unlike pre-1950, the military establishment certainly is not subordinate to civilian rule; quite to the contrary, it is very much politically active.

In the presidential elections of 2007, the military was active in denouncing the Justice and Development Party's presidential candidate Abdullah Gul, a devout Muslim, who General Yasar Buyukanit condemned as "trying to corrode the secular nature of the Turkish Republic."<sup>218</sup> Most recently, in January 2008, an organization known as "Ergenekon" was cracked down on by police; it was uncovered that it was planning to engineer a coup that would have taken place in 2009, and was connected to elements within the military and bureaucracy. Along with this, it has come to light that this group was responsible for attempting to whip up public opinion against the regime in power by carrying out assassinations and terrorist attacks, such as the murders of a senior judge at the Council of State in 2006, and of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007. Interestingly enough, Ergenekon happens to be the Turkish version of the "Gladio" stay-behind groups; that is, an organization founded by NATO's approval to perform illegal, behind-the-scenes operations to counter the Soviet threat.<sup>219</sup> There is clear evidence of involvement of this organization in the 1971 and 1980 coups. Infamously, CIA Ankara station chief Paul Henze cabled Washington in the aftermath of the coup of 12 September

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<sup>218</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6966216.stm>

<sup>219</sup> Ganser, Daniele. NATO's Secret Armies. London: Frank Cass Verlag, 2005. 239.

1980, stating, “Our boys have done it!”<sup>220</sup> It is clear that somewhere along the way, between the path the Democratic Party chose by sending of troops to Korea and 1960, the integrity of Turkey’s national sovereignty was severely compromised.

Economically, as pointed out, the nation suffered greatly. While the country became one of the largest recipients of foreign aid from the United States, owing largely to the loyalty shown by sending thousands of troops to Korea, it subsequently became dependent on these handouts. As a result, Turkey was driven into a seemingly never-ending cycle of foreign debt, leading to runaway inflation, a weak currency, and widespread poverty. While agricultural production reached new heights under the Democrat Party’s rule, it is clear that the expansion of industrialization was clearly a failure. This perhaps could be attributed to the fact that Turkey received all its finished goods from abroad, thus making local production unnecessary. Thus, Turkey’s industrial base until today reels under the effect of this. While the Democrats had large goals for Turkey, claiming that Turkey would become a “little America”, newspaper columnist Oktay Eksi recently pointed out, “Our goal was to become a little America; instead, we transformed into a little Brazil.”<sup>221</sup>

The contribution to the Korean War must be viewed as a precedent turning point in the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey as well. It was the first time the country went to war since its foundation, and the first time the armed forces were committed to a conflict to resolve a matter that could, and should, have been resolved by political and diplomatic maneuver, an approach very different from before. The Korean War basically has set the precedent that it is acceptable to utilize the military as a diplomatic resolution

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<sup>220</sup> Birand, Mehmet Ali. 12 Eylül Saat 04:00. Istanbul: Milliyet Publishers, 1985. 1.

<sup>221</sup> *Hurriyet*, April 16, 2005

force. This especially is self-evident when contrasted with the Mosul case in 1920s, comparing it with the Turkish government's policy towards Cyprus, which resulted in an invasion in 1974, and especially Turgut Ozal's policy towards Iraq during the First Gulf War. Regarding his pro-American stance regarding the Iraqi conflict, "He loved to repeat to his audience that just as Turkey's participation in the Korean War gained it admission into NATO, its policy in the Gulf crisis would earn its accession into the EU."<sup>222</sup> Indeed, in one famous incident, he posed in a tank, telling reporters, "No, I'm not going on pilgrimage to Mecca. I'm taking the short cut to the European Community."<sup>223</sup> Unlike in the case of Korea, in this case the Turkish military establishment was against an invasion of Iraq along with US forces; indeed, Ozal's stance was a highly unpopular among the public as well, considering it was regarded widely that such an action would result in heavy casualties. It must be kept in mind that conditions at this time was very different; unlike in 1950, the military at this point was not a recently purged organization firmly under civilian control; therefore, this time, the military had a lot more to say, "Retired Turkish generals protested that Ataturk's foreign policy was based on Turkey keeping itself to itself, that the army was trained for defense not attack, and that if Turkey went out on a limb it would find itself alone"<sup>224</sup>.

It is important to mention that the Korean War had an important role in defining Turkish society as well. It served as a crucible where national image is re-forged; a myth was born for Turks domestically and internationally. As a result, the war crystallized

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<sup>222</sup> (72)Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing a new millennium*, Manchester University Press, New York 2003.

<sup>223</sup> (Pope 219)

<sup>224</sup> Pope 219



nationalist tendencies, culminating in the events of September 6-7, 1955, and reintroduced Islamic strains to the forefront. Both of these two results have forever altered Turkey. The former caused the government to fall, even though the Democrats would manage to retain power, and a mass migration of the remaining Greek minority in Turkey. The latter is visible today, with the fiery debate over the headscarf ban going on. By allowing Islamic tendencies to be reintroduced in order to gain votes and combat communism, by for example allowing the Ministry of Religion to declare the war in Korea a *jihad* (holy war) and proclaiming those who were killed in action martyrs of the faith. The Korean War acted as a legitimizing factor for this re-introduction; indeed, this strain begins with the first action the Democrat Party took when it came to power, with the reintroduction of the call to prayer being allowed to be announced in Arabic, and allowing the opening of more secondary schools dedicated to training Islamic religious personnel. It must be kept in mind that by no means was the Democrat Party's leadership Islamist in nature; however, its interest was to stay in power, and to do so meant votes.

Internationally, the contribution gave the Republic of Turkey a good reputation; however, at a time when it was given a very good chance at public relations, it let Orientalist stereotypes stick and actually become stronger. While it is clear that the Turkish government and people received a very favorable view by the US State Department, this would not stick; however, the stereotypes of Turks as backward, barbarian people would. This would help color the relationship of the Republic of Turkey and Turks overall with other countries even more. On the other hand, diplomatically Turkey became recognized as a pawn of the United States, losing any credibility with the third world. Relations with the Soviet Union especially went down

the tubes; instead of the pragmatic approach during the pre-1950 era, the new government embarked on a program that basically subordinated Turkey to the United States. For example, after Stalin's death in 1953 the incoming leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev extended an olive branch to Turkey, rescinding their claims for the Straits and Kars and Ardahan, apologizing for Stalin's aggressive diplomatic posture, and offering Turkey loans and a Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship.<sup>225</sup> The Menderes government, on the other hand, completely ignored these advances, which as they turn out were genuine, believing that these were tricks to make Turkey let her guard down. Until 1964, Turkey obediently followed American instructions in pursuing its foreign policy, until the Cyprus crisis and Johnson's untactful response triggered a severe backlash within the Turkish public and political spheres. The Turks, believing they had sacrificed more than they received in return after Korea turned love for America into bitterness. While today those in Turkey continue admiring America in certain regards, the policy the United States has taken towards Turkey regarding such issues as the Armenian Genocide and Iraq has caused popular approval to reach an all new low; perhaps the popular phrase "the line between love and hate is very thin" has some clout to it after all.

The Korean War today remains largely forgotten in Turkey. The only physical reminder that exists is a largely obscure monument dedicated by the government of the Republic of Korea in Ankara. Besides this, the veterans themselves are mostly out of sight and unheard from. Most complain of the fact that the government rarely acknowledges their presence; they say that the South Korean government, the United

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<sup>225</sup> Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy

Nations, and the United States gave them medals, but that the Turkish government has not yet given any of them even a “lapel pin made of tin”. The Koreans, on the other hand, have not forgotten Turkey or the Turkish veterans. In the aftermath of the August 1999 Earthquake, they were one of the first countries to send aid to Turkey. The Korean government gives Turkish Korean War veterans stipends, and besides the medals and monuments they had erected in Ankara and Korea, gave all of them a chance to return to Korea at the expense of the Korean government. Most recently, during the 2002 FIFA World Cup, which took place in South Korea, the event out to be a massive reunion for the veterans of the “Forgotten War”. In another interesting outcome, due to Turkey’s involvement in Korea, Islam would be introduced to Korea, and today over 100,000 Korean Muslims exist.<sup>226</sup> On the other hand, because of their exposure to Korean and Japanese culture due to their service in the Far East, Turanist nationalist organizations would start including South Korea (interestingly enough carefully excluding North Korea) and Japan as areas inhabited by Turanians.<sup>227</sup>

All the Turkish soldiers who died in Korea were buried there, supposedly due to religious reasons,<sup>228</sup> making this process of erasing this event from memories much easier and painless; however, although the Turkish veterans of this forgotten war may be forgotten today, the consequences live with us. The dominoes from Korea continue falling today, as observed from the recent incursion into Northern Iraq and the Ergenekon scandal, the economic situation and entry into the European Union, the action taken by the Turkish Constitutional Court to ban the Justice and Development Party, and the clash

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<sup>226</sup> <http://www.islamawareness.net/Asia/KoreaSouth/>

<sup>227</sup> <http://www.hunmagyar.org/turan/turan.html>

<sup>228</sup> Yalta, Bahtiyar. Kunuri Muhabereleri ve Geri Cekilmeler

over the role of religion in Turkey as exemplified by the headscarf ban case. While the chain reaction began with Korea, where this path shall take the Republic of Turkey next remains to be seen.