

Escaping the Whirlpool of War: a Two-fold Analysis of Turkey's Neutrality Policy in World War II

Murat ÖNSOY

Doç. Dr., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, İİBF, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü
E-mail: onsoymurat@hotmail.com

Gürol BABA

Doç. Dr., Ankara Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi, Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü
E-mail: gurolbaba@gmail.com

Geliş Tarihi: 07.01.2019 Kabul Tarihi: 21.03.2019

ABSTRACT

ÖNSOY, Murat; BABA, Gürol, **Escaping the Whirlpool of War: A Two-fold Analysis of Turkey's Neutrality Policy in World War II**, CTAD, Year 15, Issue 29 (Spring 2019), pp. 123-147.

Turkey was one of the few countries that remained neutral during World War II. It was a big test for the government in Ankara since the rights of the wartime neutrals (particularly that of the small powers) were often ignored and they were labeled by the belligerents with such derogatory terms as “*immoral free riders*” or “*war profiteers*”. This article argues that, Turkish ruling elite's choice of neutrality was not taken based on simple calculations of profiting from the trade with the belligerents, but it was their number one priority due to a national security psyche deeply ingrained in their past experiences. To this end, this article will firstly re-unfold the roots of Turkish neutrality philosophy. Secondly it will give a deeper analysis of the diplomatic methods undertaken by the Turkish ruling elite (balancing, bridging alignments, evasion, procrastination, downplaying countries strategic value, exhibiting pro-status quo tendencies, etc..) to

counter the developments (i.e. changing perceptions/war aims of belligerents) that would lead to its belligerency.

Keywords: Turkey, Neutrality, World War II, Britain, France, Germany, İsmet İnönü

ÖZ

ÖNSOY, Murat – BABA, Gürol, **Savaşın Girdabından Kaçmak: Türkiye'nin İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Tarafsızlık Politikasının İki Yönlü Analizi**, CTAD, Yıl 15, Sayı 29 (Bahar 2019), s. 123-147.

Türkiye İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda tarafsız kalan az sayıda ülkeden bir tanesi olmuştur. Ankara hükümetinin dış politikadaki bu tercihi, tarafsız devletlerin haklarının çoğu kez göz ardı edildiği (daha ziyade küçük ölçekli devletlerin) ve onların muharipler tarafından “ahlaksız bedavacılar” ve “harp zenginleri” gibi benzetmeler ile itibarsızlaştırıldığı bir dönemde kendisi için büyük bir sınavdı. Bu makalede iddia edilen Türk yönetici sınıfının İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndaki tarafsızlık tercihinin savaşan taraflarla ticaretten edinilecek kar benzeri günlük hesapların çok ötesinde, onların geçmiş deneyimlerinin de etkisiyle millî güvenlik algılarında şekil bulan anlayıştan kaynaklı bir ölüm kalım mücadelesi olduğudur. Çalışmada ilk olarak Türk yönetici sınıfının bilinçaltına nüfuz etmiş olan tarafsızlık politikasının arkasında yatan sebepler tartışılacaktır. İkinci olarak, Türkiye'nin tarafsızlık politikasını riske atıcı gelişmeler karşısında Türk yönetici sınıfının, ülkenin savaş dışı konumunu muhafaza etmek amacıyla uyguladığı diplomatik manevraların bir analizi yapılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Tarafsızlık, II. Dünya Savaşı, İngiltere, Fransa, Almanya, İsmet İnönü

Introduction

World War II was a whirlpool pulling almost every nation into the conflict. At the outbreak of the war there were only four belligerents, and at the end only a few countries remained neutral. The rights of the neutrals were rarely respected by the belligerents and they were often depicted as “immoral free riders” that are ready to take the advantage of the conflicts without shouldering the costs.¹ However, neutrality should be considered as a rational choice as it is taken on the rational assessment of states' national priorities. Just as the realpolitik view of the requirements of the situation force some states to take a belligerent status, the same instinct force some others to remain neutral. On the other hand, from the perspective of the small powers, neutrality is a security guarantee to abstain from power politics of larger powers. For them, the option of remaining neutral is much more than a simple cost-benefit calculation, it is

¹ Neville Wylie, *Victims or actors? European neutrals and non-belligerents, 1939-1945*, in Book, *European Neutrals and Non Belligerents During the Second World War*, Ed:Wylie, Neville, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.1.

often a matter of life and death.² Moreover preserving neutrality was not an easy task for them as the violation of their legal rights come with low costs to the larger powers.³

During the war Turkey, a small power at the time,⁴ showed great determination to preserve its neutral stance unchanged.⁵ For accomplishing this difficult task, Ankara exhibited pro-status quo tendencies and took actions which were directed at balancing its vulnerabilities (economic, military etc.) and counterbalancing the expectation and interests of the belligerent powers. The Turkish ruling elite used methods such as bridging alignments, downplaying countries strategic value as a military ally, and performing go-between actions.⁶ For them maintaining neutrality was much more than sustaining economic and political relations with both the Axis and the Allies, it was a matter of life and death.⁷

Although Turkey's neutrality during World War II was comprehensively examined ⁸ a significant point still needs deeper and tighter elaboration which is the discrepancy in the perceptions between Ankara and the capitals of the belligerent countries about the role that the former can play in the global conflict. Through an exploratory and explanatory case study analysis this article aims to add an extra layer for understanding, Turkey's determination to remain neutral in World War II. The fundamental argument is that for the Turkish ruling elite, maintaining neutrality was the top priority, at any cost and it was due to a national security psyche deeply ingrained in their past experiences which influenced almost every step taken during the war. This argument will be demonstrated by comparing and contrasting the perceptions of Turkish ruling elite and the belligerents. The article has three sections. To set the structure of

² Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, New York, Routledge, 1988, p.4.

³ Karsh, *ibid*, p.4.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of small power definition see Niels Amstrup, "The Perennial Problem of Small States: A Survey of Research Efforts", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.11, No.2, 1976, p.163-182; Tom Crowards, "Defining the Category of Small States", *Journal of International Development*, Vol.14, 2002, p.143-179. For the criteria of definition see also Maurice East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behaviour: A Test of Two Models", *World Politics*, Vol.25, No.4, p.556-576. For the middle powers, see David Mitrany, *The Progress of International Governments*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1933; George D. Glazebrook, "The Middle Powers in the United Nations System", *International Organization*, Vol.1, No.2, 1947, p.307- 315.

⁵ Nasrullah Uzman, "II. Dünya Savaşı Sonrasında Sovyet Talepleri ve Türkiye'nin Tepkisi", *Gazî Akademik Bakış Dergisi*, Vol. 11, No. 22, 2018, p.118.

⁶ Gürol Baba and Önsöy, Murat, "Between Capability and Foreign Policy: Comparing Turkey's Small Power and Middle Power Status", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 13, No. 51, 2016, pp. 3-20, p.4.

⁷ Karsh, *ibid*, p.4.

⁸ See: Deringil,1989; 1940, Weber, 1979; Tamkin, 2009; Weisband, 1973; Ataöv, 1965; Çalış, 1997; McGhee, 1954; Güçlü, 2002

the argument, the first part of the article discusses neutrality as a concept. Second part examines and interprets the components of Turkish foreign policy of neutrality in World War II which is argued to originate from four important factors: (1) the Turkish ruling elite's background, Turkey's (2)military and (3)economic weaknesses, and (4)Ankara's Russo-phobia. Thirdly, it deciphers the interactions between Turkey and the belligerents for casting a light on the latter's expectations from Turkey and in return Ankara's insistence on maintaining neutrality. This section further analyses the diplomatic methods undertaken by the Turkish ruling elite (balancing, bridging alignments, evasion, procrastination, downplaying countries strategic value, exhibiting pro-status quo tendencies, etc..) to counter the developments (i.e. changing perceptions/war aims of belligerents) that would lead to its belligerency. By referring to the US, British and German archival material this article aims to add an extra layer for understanding a small power's, Turkey in this case, determination to remain neutral in a global conflict by comparing and contrasting the perceptions of Turkey and the belligerents.

Neutrality: A Quest for Definition

As Walzer puts it, neutrality is “*a collective and voluntary form of noncombatancy*”⁹. The concept is as old as war itself. The oldest texts provide information about the relations between neutrals and belligerents. In Thucydides, the Corcyreans say that it is the duty of the Athenians, if they wish to be impartial, either to prevent the Corinthians from hiring troops on Attic soil, or to allow them the same privilege. Machiavelli, in setting out rules for the government of a principality, notes that: “*the conqueror does not want doubtful friends who will not aid him in the time of trial and the loser will not harbor you, because you did not willingly, sword in hand, risk his fate.*”¹⁰ Writing in 1625, Gotius said “*it is the duty of neutrals (qui a bello abstinent) to do nothing which may strengthen the side which has the worse cause, or which may impede the motions of him who is carrying on a just war.*”¹¹

The legal foundations of neutrality in the modern era of international relations was based on the Geneva Convention of 1865 and 1899 and Hague Convention of 1907. They are the first formal statements on war and war crimes focusing on neutrals' rights and duties during land and naval war. The fifth section of the 1907 Convention, concerning “*The Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land,*”¹² begins by referring to the

⁹ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 4th ed , Basic Books, New York, 2006 p. 234

¹⁰ Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Bantam Books, New Work, 1966, p.38.

¹¹ Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, 2005 ed., vol. 3 (Book III) [1625]

¹² Hague Convention V, ‘Convention Respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in case of War on Land’, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague05.asp,

necessity of defining the rights and duties of neutral powers “with a view to laying down more clearly the rights and duties of neutral Powers in case of war on land and regulating the position of the belligerents who have taken refuge in neutral territory.”¹³

The legal framework of neutrality did not really operate in 20. Century *realpolitik*. The Geneva and Hague Conventions became *de facto* void as the spillover effects of the World Wars turned them into global conflicts that were fought on both military and civilian fronts.¹⁴ The rights of the neutrals were rarely respected. The belligerents which are bound to respect the sovereign rights of neutral Powers felt freer to violate them.

Neutral have also suffered from negative perceptions of the international public opinion. They were seen as unconcerned with the destructive danger in which others were placed, too reluctant to fight for the cause of world order¹⁵ and depicted as “immoral free riders” that are ready to take the advantage of the conflicts without shouldering the costs.¹⁶

Such metaphors made keeping neutrality much more difficult than before and World War Two was no exception. It was a whirlpool pulling almost every nation into the conflict. At the outbreak of the war there were only four belligerents, and at the end only a few countries remained neutral.

The Roots of Turkish Neutrality Philosophy

Certain conditions that are specific to Turkey and the Turkish ruling elite, played a decisive role in country's' neutrality in World War Two. One major reason for Turkey's neutrality during World War II was the background of the Turkish ruling elite who served as military officers in the late Ottoman and Early Republican period. Serving as young officers and the bureaucrats of the Sultan they lived through one of the worst episodes of their lives and careers. Fighting on different fronts for more than ten years: the Italian War of 1911, two Balkan Wars, the First World War, and the Turkish War of Independence caused them to avoid from conflicts. After the success at the National Liberation movement, they traded the military for politics and became the rulers of the new Republic. Deringil describes them as

“The small body of men ... largely of the generation which had lived through the Young Turk Revolution, the First World War, the Turkish War of

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Roderick Ogley, *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the Twentieth Century*, Barnes & Noble Inc, Newyork, 1970, pp.5-7.

¹⁶ Neville Wylie, *Victims or actors? European neutrals and non-belligerents, 1939-1945*, in, *European Neutrals and Non Belligerents During the Second World War*, Ed: Wylie, Neville, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2002, p.1.

Liberation and the founding of the Turkish Republic. The memory of the tragic outcomes of these years conditioned their thinking. The cumulative effect of their experiences greatly influence decision-making in later days and mould the men who shaped and applied foreign policy.”¹⁷

Their psyche is reflected on the new Republic’s foreign policy. As Zürcher described, Turkish foreign policy from 1923 to the end of World War II was “cautious, realistic and generally aimed at the preservation of the status-quo and the hard won victory of 1923.”¹⁸ The motto of this founding elite’s foreign policy is to avoid regional or international conflicts. Steinbeck explains this psyche as:

“Having learned a lesson from the Ottomans’ permanent involvement in various wars and conflicts that ultimately led to the downfall of the empire, the leaders of the new Turkey aspired to be totally independent. They also believed that such independence could only be achieved if Turkey maintained a policy of neutrality in international disputes.”¹⁹

The ruling elite, regardless of their political differences, fully accepted the principle of neutrality and given highest priority to peace which refers to non-irredentism, rejecting all expansionist and revisionist aims. Weisband defined it as “the operational code of Turkish foreign policy.”²⁰ This operational code was non-revisionist for two reasons: the priority of the state-building process via concentrating all material and non-material resources, and the lack of necessary human power and resources for any expansionist ideas.

Within the members of the Turkish ruling elite during World War II, İsmet İnönü was the foremost important actor in Turkey’s neutral stance during World War II. İnönü’s insistence on neutrality to a great extent relied on the general characteristic of the Turkish ruling elite of the era which is described above.

İnönü’s guiding principle in foreign policy was caution.²¹ İnönü’s cautious approach towards the international developments helped to keep Turkey out of World War II and saved the country from foreign occupation and economic destruction. A cautious foreign policy was necessary for ‘protecting Turkey’s boundaries’. As Weisband noted

¹⁷ Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: An ‘Active’ Neutrality*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1989, p.58.

¹⁸ Eric Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1993, p.209.

¹⁹ Udo Steinbach, *The European Community, The United States, The Middle East, and Turkey*, in ‘Politics in the Third Turkish Republic, ed. Metin Hepar, Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1994, p.104 quoted in Çelik, Yasemin, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, Praeger, Westport, 1999, p.30

²⁰ Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943-1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*: Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1973, p.3,7.

²¹ John M. Vanderlippe, “A Cautious Balance: The Question Of Turkey In World War II”, *Historian*, Fall 2001, Vol. 64 Issue 1., p. 63.

“İnönü operated with a commitment one basic proposition: the preservation of Turkey for the Turks. ... Atatürk was the one to instruct his people on the territorial basis of the modern state during their transition from an imperial power to a sovereign entity, but it was İnönü who convinced Lord Curzon at Lausanne in 1923 that Turkish territorial integrity could not be transgressed except at great cost to the violator. He seems to have convinced Mussolini and Hitler of this as well.”²²

For the psyche of his attitude Lewis comments that “*Renouncing all foreign ambitions and all pan-Turkish, pan-Ottoman or pan-Islamic ideologies, he deliberately limited his actions and aspirations to the national territory of Turkey as defined by treaty, and devoted the rest of his life to the grim, laborious, and unglamorous task of reconstruction.*”²³

As a former military officer and a statesman İnönü’s psychological trends are important for understanding his cautious attitude in foreign policy. He once said in an interview “*the one cardinal principle in setting foreign policy which I followed throughout the war was that an early mistake is hard to make up.*”²⁴ An important part of İnönü’s caution was his policy of ‘waiting’ which was an excuse to gain time for better evaluation of facts.²⁵ İnönü’s first reaction to his excited men who asked for his decision on a specific topic would be to say: “*Let us first live through the evening, let us first live through the morning, and by years, months or weeks.*”²⁶ Deringil from his interview with Suat Hayri Ürgüplü, a cabinet member during World War II quotes that İnönü always reminded everyone around him of the importance of gaining time and playing the waiting game. He noted İnönü would repeat the old Turkish adage: “*There is always safety in patience*” telling his cabinet “*If we wait long enough events will develop and then we may get another insight; if one waits long enough; one of the three will die; either the rider, or the camel or the camel driver.*”²⁷ The waiting was also part of the strategy of achieving security from the victorious state.²⁸

İnönü was a very effective player in the foreign policy decision making process. The effectiveness of İnönü was due to his supervision over of a small circle of ruling elite and the Government as chief of state (*millî şef*) –the leader of the single party *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People’s Party). In

²²Weisband, *Ibid*, pp.42-44.

²³ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1961, p.250.

²⁴ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam: İsmet İnönü 1938-1950*, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1967, Volume II p. 153

²⁵Aydemir, *Ibid*, p. 157-158.

²⁶Aydemir, *Ibid*, p. 157-158.

²⁷Selim Deringil’s interview with Suat Hayri Ürgüplü in 1st November 1977, in Deringil(1989) p.71.

²⁸Kohei Imai, *The Possibility and Limits of Liberal Middle Power Policies: The Case of Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East During the AKP Period (2005-2011)*. Lexington Books, 2018, p.34.

practice İnönü had a direct impact on foreign policy formulation. He was meeting with high-ranking officials of the Turkish Foreign Ministry regularly – sometimes five to six meetings weekly – to establish the guidelines of foreign policy.²⁹ He also had direct access to all diplomatic correspondence including, diplomatic letters coming from Turkish ambassadors.³⁰ His ministers had limited autonomy in their actions. He never let his ministers to enforce their duty independent of him.³¹ Within the wartime İnönü cabinets there were both pro-Allied and pro-Axis MPs, but neither of them were influential in the foreign policy making of İnönü. Although, he corresponded with them in the formulation and the implementation of foreign policy decisions, their autonomy in decision making was very limited.³² İnönü maintained absolute control in hand, through replacing (appointed/dismissed) his bureaucrats several times. Among them, most important were the replacement of Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşü Aras with Şükrü Saraçoğlu and the later sacrificing the pro-German Foreign Minister Numan Menemencioglu “*on the altar of British friendship*”.³³ Power was so concentrated in İnönü that bringing pressure from outside elements to influence policies was very difficult. He did not attach himself to a specific individual or a group.

In addition to the ideological and political strategic elements discussed above the realistic assessment of Turkey’s military capabilities was another important factor influencing the Turkish leadership in their determination to keep Turkey out of the conflict.³⁴ Although Turkey had a large army sustaining a considerable deterrence in the region, it was not modernized at all. Most of the countries’ military equipment were out of date. Until the 1930s, Turkish leaders prioritized economic development over military modernization. The accelerated pace of military modernization, yet not effective, started only in the 1930’s with the escalation of international conflicts. According to British reports, although there were twenty-two divisions of Turkish soldiers, mechanization was very slow. Although the defense budget was increased from 23% in 1932 to 44 % in 1938, the military was still far away from resisting any of the Great Powers’. In 1937, there were only 131 fighter planes, among which only half were modern. The biggest warship in Turkey’s navy was still the one given by the Germans in World War I. Without improving countries overall stance, being an active belligerent was neither rational nor realistic for Turkey. The army was situated mostly on the west coast, as the primary threat to the

²⁹Weisband, Ibid, p.41.

³⁰ Weisband, Ibid, pp.42-44.

³¹ Deringil(1989), Ibid, p. 50.

³²Weisband, Ibid, p.46.

³³Deringil(1989),Ibid, p. 50.

³⁴Deringil(1989), Ibid, p.31.

country was Italy. It was taking months to move the army from one part of the country to the other. Although priority was given to building railways, there was still only one one-track railway from west to east of Turkey.

One other reason for Turkish neutrality was the heightened sense of threat perception coming from Russia. In the escalatory phases of World War II, first Italy then Germany became the major threat for Turkey. Yet Ankara had a deep-rooted threat perception against the Soviet Union expansionism. The clashes with the Russian Empire since 1568, left significant marks on Ottoman foreign policy, which Turkey took much of its legacy.³⁵ Turks and the Russians fought 17 wars until World War II, most of which resulted in Russian victory.

In the interwar period, Turkey preserved cordial relations with the Soviet Union. Stalin's Soviet Union, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Turkey alike, was in the middle of a transformation and followed a peaceful foreign policy. On the other hand, communism was perceived as a threat by the Turkish ruling elite, and they feared from going under the influence of the Soviet Union. However this was no reason to turn its back on a close partnership with Moscow on an anti-Western basis, although Turkey was not a solid representative of this camp. The two countries jointly proclaimed their opposition to Western dominance in economic and cultural fields.³⁶ Despite the friendly atmosphere Turkey was cautious in foreign policy. After joining the League of Nations, Ankara put out a reservation stating that Turkey would not feel obliged by the Covenant for any unjust action taken by the League members against the Soviet Union.³⁷ Thanks to the rapprochement, Turkish government received USD 8 million from Soviet Russia in 1932 following the World Economic Crisis of 1929. Such good faith in relations did not continue for long. After the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1939, the warm atmosphere in the Turkish-Soviet relations slowly came to an end.³⁸ Turkish Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu visited Moscow in October 1939 and confronted with Stalin's proposal to revise Montreux convention regarding the straits in Russia's favor. Stalin's proposal was rejected and strongly denied by Saraçoğlu.³⁹ Although the

³⁵For a brief review on Turkish-Russian relations at the end of the 1930s see: 761.6211/316, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to President Roosevelt, Ankara, November 9, 1939, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol. I. For a brief summary of the Soviet regional interests see: 740.0011 European War 1939/3552: Telegram, The Minister in Rumania (Gunther) to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, June 5, 1940, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol. I

³⁶Samuel J. Hirst, "Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 72, No 1, 2013, p. 32-53, 48.

³⁷Dilek Barlas, *Etatism and Diplomacy in Turkey: Economic and Foreign Strategies in an Uncertain World, 1929-1939*, E. J. Brill, Leiden and New York, 1998, p.127.

³⁸US Department of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office*, Washington, 1948, p. 217-259.

³⁹Deringil(1989), *Ibid*, pp.85-86

expansionist policy of Russia ended with the Bolshevik revolution for a decade or two, Moscow maintained its interests in the Straits, and Eastern Anatolia, which kept Turkish policy makers to perceive Russia as the “archenemy”⁴⁰

For İnönü, regardless of the outcome of the World War II, the winning side should do something to contain Soviet power and ambitions. He believed that a balance of Power in Europe in which Great powers check the ambitions of each other best serves the Turkish interests in international politics.⁴¹ Months before the start of World War II, during the negotiations between British, French, and Turkish diplomats, he underlined that it would be terrible if the Soviets were left undamaged and powerful at the end of a Great War taking place in Europe.

An Analysis of the Attempts to Maintain Turkey’s Neutrality in World War II

Turkish ruling elite, due to the reasons mentioned in the previous section, was determined, at any cost to maintain neutrality. However this was not merely dependent on the persistence of them. There were other non-Turkey factors, i.e. changing perceptions/war aims of belligerents even within the same alliance structure, non-compliance between these perceptions, and gradual development of events for the Allies’ advantage particularly in the last couple of years. They also struggled to adapt themselves to the changing circumstances through several strategies such as initiating rapprochements, bridging alignments, performing go-between actions, and even downplaying countries strategic value as a military ally. In the end they managed to counterbalance the expectation of a Turkish belligerency. This was possible through diplomatic maneuvers (balancing, bridging alignments, evasion, procrastination, downplaying countries strategic value, exhibiting pro-status quo tendencies, etc.). This section is an analysis of how the belligerents apprehend, evaluate and respond to the Turkish ruling elites’ diplomatic maneuvers for preserving Turkey’s neutrality.

In August 1939, the refusal of a Turkish proposal to sign a Russo-Turkish security pact, and the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between the Soviet Union and the Nazi Germany, was isolating Turkey in international politics and rising countries concerns about the future of the status quo in the Black Sea. Next, in October 1939, Ankara, signed the Tripartite Alliance (Treaty of Mutual Assistance) with Britain and France.⁴² However there was a major

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Vanderlippe, Ibid , p. 63.

⁴²Treaty of Mutual Assistance, signed 19 October 1939; League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. CC, p. 167.

discrepancy between the expectations of the signatories from the Alliance. While Great Britain and France were expecting to guarantee the active involvement of Turkey in military operations⁴³ for Turkey, the Alliance was nothing but a simple attempt to diminish countries vulnerabilities through giving an end to isolation. After all, as of October 1939, the chances of Turkey being obliged to fulfill the obligations of the Alliance was very low as the treaty provided for Turkish aid in the event of “*an act of aggression, committed by a European power and leading to war in the Mediterranean Sea*”. As of October 1939, such a thing was unlikely to happen. ⁴⁴ In late September, it has been told at first hand from the German Ambassador to Ankara Franz Von Papen, that “*in no circumstances did Germany intend to start a war in the Mediterranean*”.⁴⁵ The only major problem in the immediate aftermath of the signing of the treaty of Mutual Assistance Treaty was the reaction coming from the Soviet Union. Turkish ruling elite did their best not to repeat the mistakes of the World War I (bombardment of Russian ports) and give the Soviets reasons to go war with Turkey. The Protocol no. 2 of the treaty permitted Turkey not to take action, if the consequences would lead the country to an armed conflict with the Soviet Union. Still Turkey found itself in a security dilemma with Molotov’s words in 31 October. Addressing to the Supreme Soviet, Molotov claimed that with the Tripartite Alliance, Turkey was giving an end to its neutrality policy. He said “*It is not, however, for us to guess whether Turkey will not regret her action*”.⁴⁶ In the early episodes of the war, in which Turkey’s maneuver space was not yet limited, the country was in a position to balance its Russophobia. On the other hand the Russiaphobia of country’s ruling elite served as a leverage in the hands of the belligerents until the end of the war. For example in the 1940’s when Turkey’s concerns with the possible outcomes of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 was on the rise, the Turkish ruling elite was doubtful about whether Germany would resist “*the acquisition of the lost provinces of Turkish Armenia*” by the Soviets ⁴⁷ or even concede “*Russians the entire Dardanelles area*”. ⁴⁸

⁴³ Selim Deringil, “The preservation of Turkey’s Neutrality During the Second World War1940”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18:1, 1982, p.30.

⁴⁴ 741.6711/10: Telegram, The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State, Paris, October 19, 1939, FRUS, 1939, Vol. I

⁴⁵ Osman Öndeş, II. Dünya Savaşı:1939-1945), Altın Kitaplar Press, İstanbul, 1974, p.756.

⁴⁶ V.M. Molotov, Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union. Report by the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissar of the U.S.S.R. and Peoples Commissar of Foreign Affairs, in Türkkiye Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1939-1945*, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1965, p.64.

⁴⁷ 740.0011 European War 1939/5120: Telegram, The Charge in the Soviet Union (Thurston) to the Secretary of State, Moscow, August 14, 1940, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol I

⁴⁸ 761.62/789: Telegram, The Charge in Germany (Morris) to the Secretary of State, Berlin, November 12, 1940, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol. I

Despite the different perceptions regarding the Treaty of Mutual Alliance, Turkey's neutrality was not a major problem in the early phases of the war. Both the Axis and the Allies were to a great extent comfortable with a neutral Turkey. They saw Turkey more as a strategic material provider, i.e. chrome, or some type of a supply base than a significant combatant. Among the belligerents, Germany was the most ardent supporter of Turkey's neutrality. From the German perspective, a neutral Turkey would be useful for the stability in the eastern Mediterranean and a guarantee for the uninterrupted supply of certain raw materials including chrome.⁴⁹ For the UK, Turkey's neutrality was also necessary since the latter could not provide an immediate and substantial strategic military support to the Allied camp. British High Command claimed that Turkey with its capabilities at the beginning of the War would be a liability rather than an asset.⁵⁰ It would therefore be more suitable to use British strategic capabilities elsewhere rather than building up Turkey's potential.⁵¹ London's aim was to take necessary measures to limit Turkey's contribution to German war economy together with restricting Turkish-German trade's negative effects on Turkey's commerce with the Allies. In this regard, the Allies demanded over and over the limitation of Turkey's trade relations with Germany. The US also supported the UK in this respect.⁵² Accordingly Washington and London implemented a program of preclusive purchases of Turkish chromite and other minerals to ensure a limitation on exports of certain goods and materials to Germany.⁵³

1940 was a tough year for Turkey in terms of neutrality as a result of the unforeseen developments such as the fall of France and the spread of the war to the Balkans. Country's role as a neutral power which provides strategic materials to the belligerents and a gatekeeper on the Straits was in danger. According to Deringil, developments of that year "*presented the Turkish foreign policy planners with great difficulty in the application of their policies. It was a year of severe crises and unforeseen events*"⁵⁴

⁴⁹Weinberg, Gerhard L: *A world at arms: a global history of World War II*. Cambridge University Press: 1994,p. 219.

⁵⁰ 740.00/785: Telegram, the Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State, Paris, April 12, 1939; 760C.62/680, The Charge in France (Wilson) to the Secretary of State, Paris, June 24, 1939, FRUS, 1939, Vol. I

⁵¹David L. Gordon, Dangerfield, Royden, *The Hidden Weapon: The Story of Economic Warfare*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947, p.120

⁵² 762.00/240: Telegram, The Charge in Germany (Gilbert) to the Secretary of State, Berlin February 4, 1939, FRUS, 1939, Vol. I

⁵³ For the details see: Reciprocal Trade Agreement between the United States and Turkey, April 1, 1939. For the text see: the US Department of State Executive Agreement Series No. 163, or 54 Stat. 1870.

⁵⁴ Deringil (1982), *Ibid*, pp. 30-52. p.30.

On March 1940, Turkish Prime Minister, under the rumors about Italy's entry into the War and Soviet Union's invasion of Bessarabia, announced Turkey's neutrality and declared his foreign policy aim as keeping Turkey "out of the war".⁵⁵ The Allied protests after Turkey's declaration in advance not to enter the war against Italy did not last long. A report by the British have estimated that Turkey could not resist a possible German attack to Anatolia. In such a case, British assistance was also not very likely and the German armies could reach the Middle East in 16 weeks through the Turkish soil. Therefore the Allied revised their strategy and abandoned pressuring Turkey to join war. Instead they started helping her to maintain neutrality against Germany.⁵⁶

Similar concerns were also shared by the USA. The question of the amount of strategic support to be provided to Turkey by the Allies and how much support could Turkey provide back was voiced by the US ambassador to Ankara MacMurray in his telegram to the US secretary of State. MacMurray was asking the Secretary of State "whether ... [Turkey] could do that would be useful to the common cause and whether the Allies may not prefer to have Turkey stand aloof for the time being rather risk spreading the conflict to the Balkans".⁵⁷ At about the same time, Germany started a diplomatic offensive for limiting the scope of the Mutual Alliance Treaty.⁵⁸ Von Papen was proposing Turkey a German-Turkish treaty that would on the one hand not be conflicting with Anglo-Turkish obligations, guaranteed the neutrality of the country on the other.⁵⁹

The fall of France in June 1940 was a great shock for Turkey which upset countries calculations as one of the parties to the Mutual Alliance Treaty was no more present. Furthermore, the power balance in the Mediterranean was disappearing as the Italians were abandoning their neutrality in favor of the Axis. The Mutual Assistance Treaty, once a safe haven for Turkey, was now becoming the number one security dilemma, obliging it to enter the war against Italy. For the UK and France, with the Italian involvement in the war, the situation was ripe enough for Turkey to fulfill its commitments arising from the Tripartite Alliance. However Turkey refused their claims by saying that the Alliance was no longer valid, due to the France's inability to fulfill its

⁵⁵ 867.20/101: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, March 1, 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. I

⁵⁶ Deringil, (1982), Ibid, pp. 30-52. p.43.

⁵⁷ 740.0011 European War 1939/3678: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, June 11 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. I

⁵⁸ Deringil, Selim, The preservation of Turkey's Neutrality During the Second World War 1940, Middle Eastern Studies, 18:1, pp. 30-52. p.31.

⁵⁹ Deringil, (Ibid), 1982, pp. 30-52. p.31.

obligations.⁶⁰ More importantly, the reaction of the Soviet Union to a possible declaration of war against Italy was unknown.⁶¹ Under these circumstances, on 26 June 1940, Turkey once more declared its non-belligerency⁶² through applying protocol 2 of the Tripartite Alliance. ⁶³ As Deringil states this was the time when British realized that “*Turkey would not be moved by anything except her own interest*”⁶⁴

In the second half of the 1940’s, the atmosphere which led to Turkey’s close cooperation with the Allies since the beginning of the war was slowly vanishing. The threatening situation for Allied armies in the Middle East and India had repercussions in Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, Ankara was alarmed by the Axis threat which draw closer to its borders with the Italian attack on Greece in October, and Romania’s conclusion of an alliance treaty with Germany same month. Besides that Ankara realized that the US, Britain and France could not replace Germany as trade partners.⁶⁵ The flow of military aid from the Allies based on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance was far from being satisfactory.

Under these circumstances Turkey initiated a rapprochement strategy with the Axis which Özden calls as a “*physical survival strategy*”⁶⁶ that very well fits countries foreign policy psyche. This forged a new German-Turkish commercial agreement in July 1940, which excluded chrome sale and arms transportation through Turkish lands, but “*providing for an exchange of goods to the value of £, 4 million, Germany to supply Turkey with machinery, spare parts, and rolling stock, for Turkish tobacco, mohair, olive oil, dried fruits, oats, cattle-feeding cake, opium, skins, and cotton*”.⁶⁷

However, Turkey showed its attachment to neutrality and country’s non-revisionist stance with the start of the Greco-Italian war in October 1940. Despite the opportunity to retake some territories such as the ones lost to

⁶⁰ 740.0011 European War 1939/3810: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, June 14, 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. I; see also Butler, J.R.M., *The History of the Second World War*, United Kingdom Military Series, *Grand Strategy*, vol. II, September 1939-June 1941 (London, 1958), p. 301.

⁶¹ Cenan Çakmak, “Turkey In The Second World War: "Evasive" Or "Active" Neutral?” *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Sayı 26 pp.61-78, p.66

⁶² 740.0011 European War 1939/4293: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, June 29, 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. I

⁶³ Deringil, (1982), *Ibid*, pp. 30-52. p.39.

⁶⁴ Deringil,(1989), *Ibid*, p.106.

⁶⁵ 811.20 Defence (Materials)/16: Telegram, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Kennedy) to the Secretary of State, London, June 22, 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. III

⁶⁶ Haluk Özden, *The Diplomatic Maneuvers of Turkey in World War II*, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Bahar 2013, Sayı 37, s. 91-110

⁶⁷ Turkey since 1940, *Bulletin of International News*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 19, No. 18 (Sep. 5, 1942), pp. 778-785, 780.

Greece during the Balkan wars, Ankara gave Greece certain assurances including a declaration of war to Bulgaria in the case of a hostile act of that country. These assurances enabled Greece to withdraw soldiers from the Turkish border and move them to north against the Italians. Thanks to these assurances Bulgaria did not join the invasion of Greece and Greeks managed to stop the Italian army.⁶⁸

In early 1941, the whole Balkans were drawn into the war and the Allies were searching for the ways of persuading Turkey to become a belligerent. On the other hand Germany have deployed great numbers of German troops in Romania in January with the aim of occupying Bulgaria. Such an invasion would be against the security interests of the Soviet Union and would mean a deterioration of the relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. The occupation of Bulgaria by the German armies, would indicate the end of the German-Soviet alliance, a development which would please the Turkish side. Yet Ankara still did not consider that Germany would occupy Turkey even after the occupation of Bulgaria or Romania. Ankara calculated that Romania's occupation might "*be purely local and intended merely to assure German control and protection of natural resources*" or "*intended to establish the strategic basis for a German attack on Russia*".⁶⁹ Still Ankara did not hesitate to mobilize troops to Eastern Thrace numbering approximately 300,000.

Despite the rapprochement with the Germans, the advance of their armies in to the Balkans and the presence of the German troops in Bulgaria was creating an insecure environment for Turkey. On the other hand, the Soviet attitude towards Turkey was far from being friendly. Under these circumstances the Turkish ruling elite draw their country closer to the Allies for a second time.⁷⁰ But this time the British were supporting the idea of opening a front in the Middle east therefore insisting for Turkey's belligerency. At the beginning of January 1941 Lieutenant General Cornwall, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the British forces in the Near East and Air Vice Marshal Elmhurst visited Ankara to call Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance of October 1939, (which Turkey considered invalid) to "*induce Turkey to take an active part in the war*".⁷¹ Next, on 31 January 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent İnönü a letter warning him about the German military infiltration to Bulgaria

⁶⁸ Çakmak, Ibid, pp.61-78, p.69

⁶⁹ 740.0011 European War 1939/6147: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, October 18, 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. I

⁷⁰ 740.0011 European War 1939/5092: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, August 13, 1940, FRUS, 1940, Vol. I

⁷¹ 740.0011 European War 1939/7608: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, January 14, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

and Rumania and offered reciprocal British air forces stationed in Turkey.⁷² İnönü refused Churchill's offer since accepting UK fighters and anti-aircraft guns would mean Turkey's official entry into the War.⁷³ In February, the Italian armies were defeated in Greece, the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden visited Ankara and demanded Turkish declaration of war against Germany in the case of a German attack for backing the Italians in Greece. His proposal was also refused by İnönü who underlined Turkey's military unpreparedness, downplaying countries strategic value as a military ally.

German armies invaded the entire Balkans in the early months of 1941. The possibility of a German invasion of Turkey was still intact. However at this point, the Germans formulated a new attitude against Turkey by turning into an ardent supporter of country's neutrality which was due to the deterioration of German-Soviet relations. İnönü was relieved by a letter that he received from Hitler in early March which indicated Germany's respect for Turkish neutrality, assuring the inviolability of Turkish borders and promising not to move German troops closer than 30 km from the Bulgarian-Turkish border.⁷⁴

The rapprochement between Turkey and Germany bore fruits and negotiating started between the two countries for the signing of a friendship treaty. Germany's attitude towards Turkey finally led to the signing of the German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship on 18 June 1941, in which the parties promised not to take any aggressive action, directly or indirectly, against each other.⁷⁵ With such a move days before attacking the Soviet Union, Germany was ensuring Turkey's friendship and destabilizing country's relations with the Allies.⁷⁶

Turkish-German reconciliation was followed by a joint Turkish-German communique, stating that Germany's "*exercising pressure, concentrating troops in Bulgaria*" has no intention of "*attacking Turkey*".⁷⁷ Several commercial arrangements accompanied this, including a trade agreement, known as the Clodius agreement, signed in October 1941, covering an exchange of Turkish

⁷² The UK Prime Minister's Office files 3/445/6, Churchill to İsmet İnönü, 31 January 1941.

⁷³ Onur Öymen, *Silabsız Savaş: Bir Mücadele Sanatı Olarak Diplomasi*, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul, Haziran 2002, p. 82.

⁷⁴ 740.0011 European War 1939/9148, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, Washington, March 15, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III; 740.0011 European War 1939/9576, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, Washington, March 24, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

⁷⁵ 740.0011 European War 1939/12250: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, June 19, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

⁷⁶ 740.0011 European War 1939/11120: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, May 19, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III; Leitz, (2001), p.86.

⁷⁷ 740.0011 European War 1939/15752: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, October 9, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

raw materials in exchange for German war materials.⁷⁸ Turkey agreed to supply 45,000 tons of chrome to Germany in 1941-1942, despite its obligation to sell all chrome produced until January 1942 to the British.⁷⁹ England consented to Turkey's treaty with Germany as doing otherwise would result in country's complete shift to the Axis powers. Instead of marginalizing Ankara, the British concentrated their efforts to keep Turkey in a state of neutrality.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Turkey found itself even in a more contradictory situation as being bound to Germany with the Treaty of Friendship and to the UK with a mutual assistance treaty. Turkish side, desiring both a rapprochement with Germany and avoiding a rupture with the Allies did not let the Germans to use Turkish territory to dispatch arms and men to the Middle East to help the anti-British uprising in Iraq. The Soviet Union also withdraw its demands from the Allies with regard to Turkish Straits and declared its acceptance of Turkey's Neutrality without any objection.⁸⁰

By late 1941 the British once more changed their Turkey policy and pushed Turkey for belligerency to be able to open a new Balkan front. To this end they supplied Turkey with war materials. British military assistance increased to a level that it could help to liberate the Balkans and support the British war strategy in the Middle East.⁸¹ The British believed that with military equipment transfer to Turkey was enough for the country to enter the war on the side of the Allies.⁸² Meanwhile, the US, which as of December 1941 was involved in the war, did not share the same opinion about Turkish involvement in the war. For them Turkish military was a second grade supporting factor in the Middle East.⁸³ However, Turkey refused to be pushed into belligerency. According to the Turkish side, the transfer in the past year was hardly enough to strengthen Turkey's territorial defense.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ The agreement was named after Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry Dr. Carl August Clodius. 811.20 Defense (M)/8452: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, October 3, 1941; 841.24/851: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, October 4, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

⁷⁹ 811.20 Defence (M)/3364a: Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant), Washington, September 19, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

⁸⁰ Christos Rozakis, *The Turkish Straits*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, p.45

⁸¹ 867.24/226: Telegram, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, London, February 14, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol IV

⁸² 867.24/211, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Welles), Washington, October 21, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

⁸³ 867.24/196, Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. George V. Allen of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, November 4, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III

⁸⁴ Allied Relations and Negotiations with Turkey, College Park Archives USA p.2; see also: 867.24/196, Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. George V. Allen of the Division of Near

By early 1942, Turkey was diplomatically relieved to a great extent and was more distanced to the idea of belligerency than ever. War was gradually moving away from its borders and Germany was advancing in Soviet Russia, thereby, the archenemy was no more posing a threat to its borders. However, by mid-1942, certain developments on the battlefield pointed to a significant change in the tide of war in favor of the Allies. The close collaboration between England and Soviet Russia and the signing of a mutual assistance treaty between them in May 1942 once more created an insecure environment for Turkey. Ankara believed that there may be secret clauses in the treaty concerning the Turkish Straits. However the Allies propagated that Soviet Russia in its present strength was not in a position to invade Turkey, on the other hand Germany represent a more imminent threat for the country.⁸⁵

By early 1943, Soviet defensive capabilities improved greatly and the Allies made important progress in North Africa. The tide of the war was slowly turning in Allies favor. The Allied war aims had to be decided. At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to open a new front in the Mediterranean and start the invasion of Sicily and mainland Italy. However, debates were so contentious that no further targets could be agreed upon. Prolonged negotiating brought a tough compromise in Casablanca over the capture of Sicily. But, as the next step, the Americans were pushing for the liberation of France, while the British insistent on an operation in the Balkans. The only thing that the parties agreed was an increase in military assistance to Turkey.⁸⁶ There was a consensus on the fact that Turkey's belligerency could "open the shipping route ... on the Black Sea"⁸⁷ and air campaigns could be waged "from Turkish bases to the Romanian oil fields which are of such vital importance to the Axis".⁸⁸ However this did not mean for the US, opening of a front in the Balkans. Good fortune was on the side of İnönü, as the Americans contrary to the British were reluctant to the idea of opening a Balkan front after the Italian Campaign.

However, Churchill did not give up. For convincing İnönü to Turkey's belligerency, he personally stepped in and met with İnönü in Adana by late

Eastern Affairs, Washington, November 4, 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. III; 740.0011 European War 1939/20008: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, March 6, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol IV

⁸⁵ Edward Reginald Vere-Hodge, Turkish Foreign Policy 1918-1948, Universite De Geneve, Switzerland, 1950, p.154

⁸⁶ J.C.S. Files, Memorandum by the British Joint Planning Staff, Casablanca, January 18, 1943.

⁸⁷ Roosevelt Papers: Telegram, Prime Minister Churchill to President Roosevelt, London, December 2, 1942.

⁸⁸ Roosevelt Papers: Telegram, Prime Minister Churchill to President Roosevelt, London, December 2, 1942.

January to discuss Allied military assistance in return for Turkey's entry in War and its permission to build bases in Turkey.⁸⁹ What Churchill offered was the transfer of naval vessels, 2,300 tanks, 2,600 guns and howitzers, 1,200 aircraft and 120,000 tons of aviation fuel, 25 RAF squadrons, attendant anti-aircraft guns, and several anti-tank and armored divisions.⁹⁰ Churchill with such deal expected that Turkey could move from strict neutrality towards an Allies-tilting attitude and give permission to use Turkish airfields for bombing the Rumanian oil fields.⁹¹ At the end of the meeting, Churchill got nothing but a vague promise from İnönü to reconsider Turkish neutrality. On the other hand, İnönü rejected Churchill's demands regarding the bombing of the Rumanian oil fields due to two major reasons: Firstly, German armies despite being in bad shape were still capable of destroying Turkey; secondly, British military assistance was still below Turkey's expectations.⁹² Churchill was not in a position to compel Turkey for belligerency as the US was not supportive of future operations in the Balkans.

The Quebec Conference in August 1943 was the sign of the gradual decline of Turkey's value as a military asset. The Allied expectations from Turkey was to provide its airspace for Allied planes, prohibiting the shipment of German military goods to the Black Sea, and stopping chrome deliveries to Germany.⁹³ During the Conference the US Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that the "*considerable effort [was given] toward bringing Turkey into the war as an ally*", which took "*the form of very sizeable economic aid and ... military commitment of considerable proportions*" has not been fruitful and "*the current estimate is that the Turkish attitude is unlikely to change*" therefore the Allies decided that not to continue sending "*aid to Turkey, at the present scale*".⁹⁴ It was also added that Turkey's entry into war against Germans in the eastern Mediterranean would still be a weak or inactive offensive regarding

⁸⁹ For the details of Adana Conference see: the Exchange of Messages Between President Roosevelt and Turkish President İnönü Regarding a Conference between British Prime Minister Churchill and President İnönü at Adana, Turkey, January 30 and 31, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. IV

⁹⁰ Michael Howard, *The History of the Second World War*, The United Kingdom Military Series, *Grand Strategy*, vol. IV, August 1942-September 1943 (London, 1972), pp. 376-389. in Allied relations and negotiations with Turkey, College Park Archives USA p.3; J.C.S. Files, Memorandum by the British Joint Planning Staff, Casablanca, January 18, 1943; 740.0011 European War 1939/276621: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, February 2, 1943; 740.0011 European War 1939/276631: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, February 3, 1943.

⁹¹740.0011 European War 1939/276621: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, February 2, 1943

⁹²The Exchange of Messages Between President Roosevelt and Turkish President İnönü Regarding a Conference between British Prime Minister Churchill and President İnönü at Adana, Turkey, January 30 and 31, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. IV

⁹³ Allied relations and negotiations with Turkey, College Park Archives USA p.3

⁹⁴ J.C.S. Files, Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff, Washington, 9 August 1943, Secret, Enclosure to C.C.S. 303, Strategic Concept for the Defeat of Axis in Europe

Turkey's forces' conditions at the time.

Turkey's belligerency was also on the agenda of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers which was held in October-November 1943. But the Conference showed that the parties still had no consensus on Turkey's role. But it can be said that significance of Turkey was further diminishing. By the time the Allies were moving their resources westward for landings in France and Italy. When the Soviet delegation asked to the British whether the Allies needed Turkey's participation, the British responded by saying "*There was no disagreement between them as to the desirability of bringing Turkey into the war*".⁹⁵ But when Molotov proposed exerting extra pressure on Turkey for a declaration of war against Germany, it was rejected by the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden. Hull stated that the US kept on its initial proposal to use Turkish air bases.⁹⁶ Eden was also against the Soviet proposal due to Britain's inadequate preparation in the eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁷

The Tehran Conference in November 1943 was a turning point for Turkey's delicate positioning as a neutral country. This time it was Soviet Premier Josef Stalin who brought the issue of Turkey's belligerency to the table. Stalin argued that the war would finish earlier with the participation of Turkey. Stalin was supported by Churchill who was still promoting the idea of opening a Balkan and a Mediterranean front. Yet Roosevelt reiterated that the issues of the eastern Mediterranean were of secondary importance.⁹⁸ With Stalin's pressure, it was finally agreed that Roosevelt and Churchill meet İnönü, for persuade him to enter Turkey to war by the end of 1943.⁹⁹ Before the planned meeting of the three, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the British Ambassador in Ankara, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen met Numan Menemencioğlu, Turkish Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, between 4 and 8 November to discuss the Allied demands. Menemencioğlu thought the outcome of Allied use of Turkish air bases and a declaration of war would lead to German reprisals including air attacks on İstanbul and İzmir.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943-1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*: Princeton University Press.1973 p.169.

⁹⁶ 740.0011 Moscow/10-2843, United States Delegation Minutes of the Tenth Regular Meeting of the Moscow Conference on October 28, 1943.

⁹⁷ Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London, 1962), pp. 325-326, and Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. V, *Closing the Ring* (Boston, 1951), pp. 286- 288, 334-335; Allied relations and negotiations with Turkey, College Park Archives USA p.3.

⁹⁸ Tehran Conference Proceedings, The First Plenary Meeting, November 28, 1943.

⁹⁹ Hopkins-Eden-Molotov Luncheon Meeting, November 30, 1943, British Legation, Bohlen Collection, Ware Minutes, FRUS, The Tehran Conference.

¹⁰⁰ The UK Prime Minister's Office files 3/446/6, Eden (Cairo) to Foreign Office (for Churchill), No. 2082, November 7, 1943.

Roosevelt and Churchill met with İnönü during the second Cairo Conference in December 1943 to talk about a Turkish declaration of war on Germany by mid-February 1944. Churchill began to fuel Turkey's Russophobia by threatening to leave it alone in the post-War World order against Soviet demands on the status of the Dardanelles.¹⁰¹ Churchill said to İnönü that Turkey's refusal would bring very serious political and territorial consequences, particularly in regard to the future status of the straits.¹⁰² He added that: "*making impossible demands is only another way of saying no.*"¹⁰³ He insisted that Turkey's refusal to accept British proposal could be 'the virtual end of the alliance'.¹⁰⁴ İnönü did not explicitly say no to the British demands but implicitly rejected them by using the argument of military deficiency and demanding support for Turkish air forces and large amounts of military assistance which he most probably knew that would not be accepted.

İnonu wanted that Allied powers treat Turkey as equals by consulting on military and strategic policy.¹⁰⁵ In early 1944 Turkish demands to know the general Allied plans for attacking Germany was refused and subsequently Turkish authorities refused to meet a high-ranking British military delegation which visited Ankara. Turkish demands from Britain for more war materials and to be informed about the Allied war plans finally led to the withdrawal of the latter of its military mission in February 1944 and, termination of the further flow of military supplies. Churchill expressed this by stating that "*Britain had no ties with Turkey except the Montreux Convention, which was inadmissible today and obsolete.*"¹⁰⁶ At Secretary Hull's recommendation, President Roosevelt agreed to support the British policy, and US arms shipments to Turkey along with British ones ceased in February 1944.¹⁰⁷ By the early 1944, Turkey was totally alienated from the Allied camp and left isolated in the international

¹⁰¹ The UK Prime Minister's Office files 3/447/5A, Foreign Office to Hugessen, no. 1738, December 18, 1943.

¹⁰² White House Files, the Text of the Communique, Cairo, December 6, 1943; USFR, Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, p.691.

¹⁰³ For the details of the meeting see: the US Department of State Bulletin, Vol. IX, December 11, 1943, p. 412.

¹⁰⁴ The UK Prime Minister's Office files 3/447/5A, Churchill to Eden, December 13, 1943.

¹⁰⁵ Vanderlippe, Ibid, p. 64.

¹⁰⁶ The UK Prime Minister's Office files 3/434/2, 'Records of Meetings at the Kremlin, October 9–October 17

1944 – 9 October meeting, p. 7; 740.0011 European War 1939/2-444: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, February 4, 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. V

¹⁰⁷ 740.00112 European War 1939/10464: Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt), Washington, March 30, 1944; 740.00112 European War 1939/10487: Telegram, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, April 5, 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. V

politics which meant the bankruptcy of Turkey's neutrality policy.

In April 1944 Britain and the US threatened Turkey with an embargo unless Turkey stopped sending strategic materials to Germany. When Germany's loss in almost every front by the spring of 1944 became so apparent particularly after the Russian victory in Stalingrad, Turkey announced the cut off of its commercial and diplomatic relations with Germany from August 1944 onward. This was followed by Turkey's abandonment of its neutral stance, and eventual declaration of war on Germany on 23 February 1945.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

This article argued that, Turkish ruling elite's choice of neutrality was not taken based on simple calculations of profiting from the trade with the belligerents, but it was their number one priority due to a national security psyche deeply ingrained in their past experiences. To this end, this article firstly re-unfolded the roots of Turkish neutrality philosophy. The components of Turkish foreign policy of neutrality in World War II is argued to originate from four important factors: the Turkish ruling elite's background, Turkey's military and economic weaknesses, and Ankara's Russo-phobia. Secondly it gave a deeper analysis of the diplomatic methods undertaken by the Turkish ruling elite (balancing, bridging alignments, evasion, procrastination, downplaying countries strategic value, exhibiting pro-status quo tendencies, etc..) to counter the developments (i.e. changing perceptions/war aims of belligerents) that would lead to its belligerency.

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¹⁰⁸ Turkish Prime Ministerial Bulletins, No 135, February 1945, p. 39.

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