

Turkish-Greek Naval Power Rivalry in the Shadow of the Population Exchange

Çağla D. TAĞMAT

Assoc. Prof. Dr., Ankara University Institute of Turkish Revolution History Balkan Studies Department, Ankara

E-Mail: tagmat@ankara.edu.tr

ORCID NO: 0000-0002-9047-0131

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ABSTRACT

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Turkish-Greek relations did not follow a steady course during or after the National Struggle, and they varied according to the political conjuncture and mutual perceptions. In 1923, after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the expected relief in relations between the two countries was not achieved. Particularly due to problems arising from the Treaty of Lausanne on issues such as the *établi* and the Patriarchate, relations were strained from time to time, and these issues were even brought before the League of Nations. Due to the overlapping of numerous problems stemming from the population exchange, it was expected that a favorable environment would emerge for the resolution of these issues. However, domestic politics occasionally prevented the formation of the anticipated positive atmosphere. The first crisis after the Lausanne Treaty occurred in Greece in 1925 when General Pangalos came to power through a coup d'état, while the second crisis occurred in 1929. The first crisis

during the Pangalos era created tension in the Aegean, as Italy and Greece cooperated, while the second crisis was driven by the naval armament efforts of Türkiye and Greece. Both countries' investments in their naval forces in the Aegean and their pursuit of new, armored ships heightened mistrust, escalating the situation to mutual confrontation. At a time when solutions were being sought for problems related to the exchange of properties and the *établi* criteria, such tensions brought the two countries closer to the brink of war. From 1928 onwards, strained relations calmed down by 1930 due to the constructive policies of both countries. The 1930 Treaty of Ankara resolved the issues between Türkiye and Greece, and a protocol added to the treaty limited naval armament for both nations. This article will analyze the 1929 crisis between Türkiye and Greece using Turkish and Greek periodicals as well as other auxiliary sources.

Keywords: 1929, Naval rivalry, Aegean Sea, Turkish-Greek relations, population exchange

ÖZ

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Türk-Yunan ilişkileri gerek Milli Mücadele dönemi gerekse sonrasında sabit bir seyir izlememiş, ilişkiler siyasi konjonktüre ve karşılıklı algıya göre deęişiklik göstermiştir. 1923 yılında Lozan Barış Antlaşması'nın imzalanmasından sonra, iki ülke ilişkilerinde beklenen ferahlama da sağlanamamıştır. Özellikle Lozan Antlaşması'ndan kaynaklanan *établi*, Patrikhane gibi konularda yaşanan problemlerden dolayı zaman zaman ilişkiler gerilmiş ve hatta konular Milletler Cemiyeti'ne kadar götürülmüştür. Özellikle Mübadele'den kaynaklanan pek çok sorunun üst üste gelmesinden dolayı, bu sorunların çözümleri için uygun ortamın oluşması beklenmiş, zaman zaman da iç siyaset beklenen olumlu atmosferin oluşmasını engellemiştir. Lozan'dan sonraki ilk kriz, Yunanistan'da 1925 yılında General Pangalos'un darbe sonucu iktidara gelmesi sonrasındaki süreçte yaşanırken, ikinci kriz de 1929 yılında yaşanmıştır. Pangalos döneminde yaşanan ilk kriz İtalya ve Yunanistan'ın iş birliği ile Ege'de bir gerilim yaratırken, ikinci kriz de Türkiye ile Yunanistan'ın deniz silahlanmasından kaynaklanmıştır. Türkiye'nin ve Yunanistan'ın Ege'deki deniz güçlerine yönelik yatırım arayışları ve yeni gemi ve zırhlı alımına yönelmeleri, iki ülke arasındaki güvensizliği arttırmış ve olay karşılıklı restleşmeye kadar gitmiştir. Özellikle Mübadil malları ve *établi* kriterlerinden kaynaklı olarak yaşanan sorunlara çözüm arandığı bu dönemde, bir de böyle bir gerilim yaşanması, savaş çanlarının çalmasına neden olmuştur. 1928 yılından itibaren gerilen ilişkiler, 1930 yılında iki ülkenin yapıcı politikalarıyla yatışmıştır. 1930 yılında imzalanan Ankara Antlaşması Türkiye ile

Yunanistan arasında yaşanan sorunları çözerken, bu antlaşmaya eklenen bir protokol de bu iki ülkenin deniz silahlanmasına sınırlama getirmiştir. Bu makalede, 1929 yılında Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında yaşanan bu kriz, Türkçe ve Yunanca süreli yayınlar ve yardımcı diğer kaynaklar bağlamında analiz edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 1929, Bahri rekabet, Ege Denizi, Türk-Yunan ilişkileri, Mübadele

Introduction

While the Lausanne Peace Treaty, signed in the aftermath of the Turkish National Struggle, brought relief to Türkiye in many respects, the country's foreign policy was shaped in two phases. From 1923 to 1930, the new Turkish state focused on solving the problems left over from the Treaty of Lausanne, while after 1930, it shaped its foreign policy in line with changes in the global context. Until 1930, Türkiye made serious efforts to regulate its relations with other states, especially Britain, France, Italy, and Greece. Although the League of Nations intervened in some of the issues that arose during this process, the treaties signed at the end of the negotiations became the determining factor in the foreign policy of the subsequent period.

The resolution of the problems with Greece took a longer process than the others. While the Lausanne Peace Treaty resolved many issues, especially capitulations, Türkiye and Greece agreed to implement a mutual population exchange program with the convention signed at the first stage of the conference (January 30, 1923). On May 1, 1923, with the implementation of the population exchange program, mutual problems began to emerge. Nevertheless, settlement of the dispute paved new ways for further problems between two countries. The fluctuations in the domestic policies of both countries also had an impact on this. On the other hand, although the problem awaiting a solution between the two countries stemmed from the population exchange, other problems arising from this phenomenon made the issue unsolvable. The definition of the concept of *établi* /resident,¹ the status of the immovable properties left by the exchangees in their country of origin, the problem of the Patriarchate, and the issues of settlement and employment of the exchanged population, which affected the domestic policies of both countries, required separate negotiations to settle each of them.

¹ According to the January 30, 1923 Population Exchange Contract, the Greeks living in Istanbul and the Muslims living in Western Thrace were to be considered residents or *établi*.

In addition to all these factors, traumatic symptoms dating back to the Greek uprisings for independence also constituted a key dynamic in Turkish-Greek relations for some time. Beginning with the period of Ottoman rule, the struggle for independence, and finally the defeat in Anatolia in 1922, left deep marks on Greek political and collective memory. Security concerns, threat perceptions and even distrust towards Türkiye, made the years leading up to 1930, a period of unrest for both countries. Furthermore, the failure of diplomatic efforts to resolve the problems before the 1930's exacerbated Greece's security uneasiness.

It is possible to assert that the domestic political developments of Türkiye and Greece in the interwar period were also a determinant of the foreign policies of both countries. In this context, the fluctuations and instability in domestic politics led to a blurred foreign policy, especially in Greece. It was not easy for Greece to consolidate its internal dynamics, having experienced two military coups just in the interwar period, until 1930. The return of Eleftherios Venizelos to power in 1928 can be seen as a brief period of restoration in Greece. Interestingly, the same years also marked a period of restructuring and radical change for Türkiye.

In the same years, Türkiye tried to overcome the crisis of confidence caused by the Şeyh Sait rebellion with the Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu (Law of Peace and Order). The years in which this law was implemented were a time when both the government's pressure on dissidents was increasing and the new Türkiye was modernising. Therefore, both states were simultaneously innovating in many areas and trying to create a unique model of their own.

In foreign policy, the Italian threat in the Mediterranean inevitably made these two countries uneasy. Italy's attack on the island of Corfu in 1923 and its threatening actions in the Mediterranean afterwards, made Türkiye and Greece, which shared the same geography, cautious. During this period, Greek politics' distrust of Türkiye led to the perception of Türkiye's efforts to reform and modernize its navy as a threat.

An Overview of Naval Rivalry in the Last Period of the Ottoman State

While the dynamics of Turkish-Greek relations were predominantly determined within the framework of the policies of the western states after the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece, the Eastern Question, of which the Ottoman State was the subject, was also beginning to move forward. In fact, the first years of the 20th century were a dynamic period not only for the balances in Europe but also for the Ottoman domestic politics. In addition to the blocization in Europe, the weakening of the Ottoman State and the

establishment of new states in the Balkans,² the declaration of the *Meşrutiyet* (Constitutional Monarchy) for the second time led to the emergence of new hopes regarding the deadlock and territorial losses into which the Ottoman State had fallen. In other words *Meşrutiyet*, which meant the declaration of freedom, marked the beginning of a new era. This period has a significant place in Turkish history, not only in terms of freedoms, but also in terms of the beginning of change and the intellectual basis for the next revolutionary process.

In Greece, the defeat in the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War caused a reform in the army. Accordingly, Greece purchased destroyers from Britain and Germany in order to strengthen and gain a superior position in the Aegean.³ In the Ottoman State, the technological changes in the world in the field of maritime led to the opening of various departments and branches within the Ministry of the Navy, especially during the reign of Abdülhamit II.⁴ In a report prepared by Admiral McKerr, who was secretly sent to Istanbul by the British government during this period, he stated that there is no navy or maritime force in Türkiye and that he could not characterize the Turkish navy as a viable force. In other words, the developments in the navy during this period remained on paper, and no practical progress was made.⁵ Besides, the defeat of the Ottoman State in the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War caused the navy to remain passive in Haliç even during the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, and foreign engineers working in the navy were dismissed.⁶ In Greece with Eleftherios Venizelos becoming prime minister in 1910, some changes started to take place in the administrative mechanism. The new prime minister focused on the reorganization of the army, the French school became effective in the land forces, while the naval forces began to be trained by the British.⁷

² With the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania gained their independence, while Bulgaria became a principality. Bulgaria's declaration of independence took place in 1908.

³ Stanford J. Shaw, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Savaşa Giriş*, I. Cilt, TTK, Ankara, 2021, p. 519.

⁴ Levent Düzcü, "Osmanlı Bahriye Teşkilatı'nda Reform Çabaları", *Akademik Bakış*, Cilt 3, Sayı 5, Kış 2009, p.3

⁵ Afif Büyüktuğrul, "Osmanlı (Türk)-Yunan Deniz Silahlanma Yarışı", *Belleten*, 1975, Cilt 39, Sayı 156, p. 733.

⁶ Yaşar Bedirhan- Figen Atabey, "Osmanlı Bahriyesi'nde Yabancı Danışmanlar", *Turkish Studies International Priodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Volume 8, No 5, Spring 2013, p. 132.

⁷ Özgür Rençberler, *Yunanistan'da Ulusal Ayrışma Söylemlerinin Eleştirel Çözümlemesi: Venizelos ve Metaksas Hesaplaşması*, Trakya University Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Edirne, 2021, p. 176.

On the other hand, the decline of the Ottoman navy became fully visible during the Tripoli War of 1911. During this war, Italian naval forces not only attacked Ottoman ports but also bombarded the ports of Mersin, Antalya and Iskenderun. Despite Italy's naval attacks, the transfer of its navy to the Aegean and even the blockade of the Dardanelles, the Ottoman State was able to prevent the Italian forces from passing through the Straits. However, the occupation of Rhodes and the Dodecanese Islands could not be prevented.⁸ Thus, Italian sovereignty in the Eastern Mediterranean began. That led Italy to become an important centre of power in the Mediterranean.

When the Turco-Italian War ended with the 1912 Treaty of Lausanne (Oushy), the weakness of the Ottoman naval forces was even reflected in the secret clause of this treaty. According to the secret clause of the treaty, the Dodecanese were to remain under Italian occupation in order to protect them from Greece in case the Mediterranean was jeopardized in the event of a war in the Balkans⁹ due to the fact that the Ottoman navy was not strong enough to defend the islands.

In addition to these, technological developments in the world began to be reflected in naval armament. Launched in 1906 in England, the *HMS Dreadnought* ushered in a new era, and the advanced naval weaponry of the dreadnoughts, as they were called, led to a periodization of naval power as “pre-dreadnought” and “post-dreadnought”.¹⁰ Overseas powers had begun to carry out their armament through dreadnoughts and serious investments had come into question.

Moreover, the most ambitious step taken by Greece before the Balkan Wars was the incorporation of the battleship *Averof* into the Greek navy,¹¹ built by the Greek administration at the Orlando naval shipyard in Livorno and financed by the Greek billionaire Averof.¹²

In fact, the process went like this: In the meantime, Italy had also ordered ships. During this period, when the fate of the Aegean was decisive, Italy received two of the three ships it had ordered from the shipyard in Livorno and abandoned the third one. Although the Ottoman administration was interested

⁸ Shaw, *ibid*, p. 520.

⁹ Necdet Hayta, *1911'den Günümüze Ege Adaları Sorunu*, Atatürk Arařtırma Merkezi Yayınları, Ankara, 2015, pp. 53-54.

¹⁰ Mehmet Beşikçi, “Birinci Dünya Savařı Öncesi İktidarın Çelik Sembolleri: donanma Sembolizmi ve Milliyetçi Propaganda”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 127, Temmuz 2004, p. 92.

¹¹ See Appendix Picture I.

¹² Shaw, *ibid*, p. 520.

in this ship, it could not purchase it due to financial insufficiency. During this period, it was difficult to decide whether to invest in the railway or the navy. The director of the shipyard took his chances with Greece and managed to attract the attention of Damianos, the Greek Minister of the Navy at the time. As a result of George Averof's donation of 8 million drachmas, on the condition that the ship be used for naval training and named after him, *Averof* joined the Greek Navy.¹³

This vessel gained a very important place in the Greek naval forces in the Aegean. With the Balkan Wars, the rivalry in the Aegean reached a quite different point. As a matter of fact, the Balkan Wars, which started in 1912, witnessed events that showed how strong the Greek fleet had become. Greece quickly started to purchase weapons and ammunition and to prepare for a possible war with new warships.¹⁴ The most important factor in the Greek-Bulgarian rapprochement before the Balkan Wars was Bulgaria's trust in the Greek navy. However, the history of the rivalry, conflict and competition between Greece and Bulgaria in the Balkans was not very old. In fact, the tendency to be the sole power against the Ottoman State united these two states, one of which was much younger than the other. During the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman States's only effective naval vessel was the battleship *Hamidiye*. *Hamidiye* was the only Ottoman ship capable of challenging *Averof*.¹⁵ Also the weakness of the Ottoman navy was reflected in the budget negotiations of 1912-1913, Cavit Bey stated that there was no navy in the Ottoman State before *Meşrutîyet*, and that the budget for the navy remained only on paper.¹⁶ On the other hand, Greece's occupation of the North Aegean Islands during the Balkan Wars caused the Ottoman State to lose its sovereignty over these strategically important islands and of course, over the entire Aegean. When the Balkan Wars ended, it was no longer possible to speak of Ottoman sovereignty over the Aegean.

After the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman State and Greece continued to purchase new warships, as this was a period when naval armament reached its peak and warship postcards were used effectively for propaganda.¹⁷ Meanwhile, both states sent their officers and enlisted men to European Naval Academies

¹³ Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Donanması Averof Zırhlısı ve Ulusal Kimlik", *Toplumsal Tarih*, No 113, May 2003, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴ Rençberler, *ibid*, p. 22.

¹⁵ Beşikçi, *ibid*, p. 92.

¹⁶ Toprak, *ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Beşikçi, *ibid*, p. 92; Also see Appendix Picture II.

for training. On the brink of the World War I, Britain decided to end this practice for her non-allies. This decision was purely strategic, aimed at preventing any information or secret tactics from falling into the hands of a potential enemy.¹⁸ In this period, Britain had little confidence in the Ottoman State, which was drawing closer to Germany. More importantly, having improved its relations with Russia, Britain had no intention of forming an alliance with the Ottoman State.

The weakness of the Ottoman navy in the Mediterranean became apparent as a result of the Balkan Wars. In January 1913, *The Union and Progress Party* (*İttihat ve Terakki Partisi*), which took power with a military coup (a.k.a *Bâb-ı Âli Baskını*, the raid on the *Sublime Porte*),¹⁹ made a rapid breakthrough in strengthening the navy.

The failure to acquire the *Averof* was a serious loss for the Ottoman State. In order to make up for the deficiency in the navy, a dreadnought was ordered from the British Vickers Company before the World War I. In addition to the dreadnought, which was planned to be named after Sultan Reşat, the Ottoman government was also interested in another dreadnought (planned to be named Sultan Osman-ı Evvel), which Brazil decided not to buy at the last minute. Both ships were expected to be completed in 1914.²⁰ After the final installment of these dreadnoughts, which had been ordered with the contributions of the *Osmanlı Donanma Cemiyeti* (*Ottoman Naval Society*),²¹ had been paid, Rauf Bey who was in charge of purchasing the dreadnought *Sultan Osman-ı Evvel* on August 2, 1914, was informed that the ships would not be delivered, and Britain even gave up on the two torpedoes that had been negotiated in addition to these ships.²²

¹⁸ Shaw, *ibid*, p. 523.

¹⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1998, p. 224.

²⁰ Toprak, *ibid*, p. 15.

²¹ As the weakness of the Ottoman navy became publicly known and the maneuvers in the Black Sea in 1909 revealed the poor condition of the navy, the need to strengthen the navy became concrete. Dr. Hafız İbrahim, Dr. İsmail Hakkı, Chief Engineer Haşim Bey and Dr. Petraki Papadopoulos came together and founded the Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti in Istanbul on July 19, 1909 with the aim of creating an Ottoman navy at the level of the French navy. See for details, Hasan Dinçer, "Kültürel Faaliyetleri Çerçevesinde Osmanlı Donanma Cemiyeti", Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, Sayı 65, Güz 2019, pp. 86-87.

²² Necmi Odabaşı, "Yunan Zırhlısı Averof'un Osmanlı Donanması ve Ekonomisi Üzerindeki Etkileri", *U.Ü Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Yıl 18, Sayı 29, 2015/2, p. 218.

On the other hand, the Ottoman State's entrance into the World War I would again be led by two vessels belonged to the German Mediterranean fleet: *Gouben* and *Breslau*. Under the command of Admiral Souchon, these two vessels passed through the Mesina Strait in Italy on August 6, 1914 and started to move towards Çanakkale. The ships had been sent to Ottoman waters by the German government to be used against Russia with the permission of Enver Pasha.²³ The fact that the government was unaware of the affair caused opinion differences. Meanwhile, as the order of vessels from Britain were canceled, the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were allowed to pass through the Straits, and they anchored in front of Çanakkale. To prevent a possible reaction from the Entente powers, the names of the ships, that had been announced as having been purchased, were changed to *Yavuz* and *Midilli* upon Cavit Bey's suggestion, and they were brought in front of Istanbul.²⁴

Yavuz and *Midilli* served in the Ottoman navy throughout the World War I. *Yavuz* was the only Turkish battleship capable of fighting the Russian naval forces during this period. In fact, it prevented the Russians from landing in the Black Sea.²⁵ *Yavuz*, while passing through an area that was believed to be free of mines according to a map taken from a British ship stranded in Enez, sustained its first damage by hitting a mine in 1917. *Midilli*, on the other hand, was sunk in January 1918 after hitting several mines off the coast of Imroz.²⁶

At the end of the World War I, in the course of the negotiations for the armistice at the battleship *Agamemnon* in Mudros, between the representatives of the Entente and the Ottoman State, an agreement was made in principle between Admiral Calthorpe and Rauf Bey, the Ottoman Minister of Naval Affairs, that Greek warships would not enter Turkish waters, but Rauf Bey's request was ignored after the Armistice was signed. With the Armistice, Averof would also be among the navies of the Entente forces anchored in the Straits. The Mudros Armistice signed on October 30, 1918, the disintegration and collapse of the Ottoman State became inevitable.

When the articles of the Armistice of Mudros are considered as a whole, it can be said that they contained serious restrictive provisions for the Ottoman

²³ Haluk Ülman, *Birinci Dünya Savaşına Giden Yol (ve Savaş)*, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara, 1972, s. 219.

²⁴ Ülman, *ibid*, p. 220.

²⁵ Figen Atabey, "Yavuz Muharebe Kruvazörü", *Atatürk Ansiklopedisi*, <https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/yavuz-muharebe-kruvazoru/?pdf=3266> Accessed: February 10, 2024.

²⁶ Mithat Atabay, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Hizmetinde Breslau (Midilli) Kruvazörü", *Çanakkale Araştırmaları Türk Yılı*, Yıl 13, Bahar 2015, Sayı 18, pp. 125-127.

State. However, the provisions that struck the hardest blow to the Ottoman State in the maritime context were Articles 6 and 9 of the armistice. These articles restricted the shipyards and ships of the Ottoman State.²⁷ Thus, the already underdeveloped Ottoman navy became even more limited, and the Ottoman State, having lost its dominance in the Aegean, surrendered its naval power to the Entente powers. In the first month following the signing of the armistice, the Allies ordered the navy to remove all the artillery from *Yavuz*, and the dreadnought, which could not fit in the Haliç, was transported to İzmit, accompanied by two British ships. *Yavuz*, which was used as a training school for apprentices, was strictly controlled during the armistice period.²⁸

Following the signing of the Armistice, four Greek ships, including the *Averof*, entered the Straits and carried out several maneuvers.²⁹ During the Greek occupations in Anatolia between 1919 and 1922, the battleship *Averof* was at the forefront, either symbolically or in action. This ship, which drew attention during the occupation of İzmir, was also used as a symbolic tool to carry the Greek kings of the period to the occupation zones. In 1921, *Averof*, which hosted King Constantine,³⁰ who arrived in İzmir, entered the repair phase with the end of the war and the renovation process started in France.

The Situation of Türkiye and Greece in the Interwar Period

With the end of the Turkish War of Independence and the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, Türkiye turned its attention to both domestic and foreign policy while simultaneously embarking on a wave of innovation. Revolutionary movements were accelerated, and important steps were taken in the field of maritime affairs and the navy. A notable development in this regard was the transformation of the Naval Ministry in Kasımpaşa into the Istanbul Naval Command on November 14, 1922, which was placed under the Naval Department for administration and under the General Staff for operations and training. The Naval Department prioritized reactivating the navy as soon as possible. During this period, Türkiye also used ships as symbols. For instance,

²⁷ Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuk ve SİYasi Tarİh Metinleri*, Cilt 1, (Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Andlaşmaları), TTK, Ankara, 1953, pp. 520-521.

²⁸ İskender Tunaboşlu, "Tarihin Son Dretnotu: Yavuz (Goeben)", *Türkİsh Studies*, Volume 10/1 Winter 2015, s. 780.

²⁹ Odabaşı, *ibid*, p. 221.

³⁰ Maria Vasilikiotou (Meryem Batan), "Savařta ve Barıřta Bir Yunan Gemisi: Averof-Yunan Kaynakları Üzerinden Bir Analiz", *Ankarad/AJARS, Ankara ve Rumeli Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt 2, Sayı 3, 2021, p. 78.

the 101-gun salute for the proclamation of the Republic was fired from Yavuz.³¹

In foreign policy until 1930, the problems arising from the population exchange treaty signed during the Lausanne Conference³² raised tension in the relations between the two countries, while Türkiye and Greece were also affected by the tense atmosphere prevailing worldwide. The first tension between the two countries in the Aegean occurred in 1925 when Theodoros Pangalos came to power in Greece with a coup d'état and started to prepare an attack plan on İzmir in cooperation with Italy.³³ Türkiye has also started to take security measures on the Aegean coast. This escalation took place at the same time that Türkiye was having difficulties in negotiations with the Britain over the Iraqi border question and that affair turned into a crisis. This was no coincidence either. In fact, Britain had negotiated with Italy to create fear in Türkiye, and Italy had chosen Greece as an ally.³⁴

In 1925, Greece took the initiative to repair the vessels *Ares* and *Ellı*, including the *Averof*, and procured 6 tugboats and 6 patrol boats from Italy and the Netherlands. The repair of the arsenal of *Salamis*³⁵ started in the meantime.³⁶ Pangalos, who took power, not only paid special attention to the issue of armament, but also demanded detailed information about the previous arms and ammunition situation. Pangalos whose tenure was brief, adopted an assertive policy towards Türkiye. However, the resolution of the Turkish Iraq border issue which had heightened tension between Britain and Türkiye, was resolved by the Ankara Agreement in 1926. This development prompted Italy to withdraw and following the overthrow of Pangalos, the Greek-Italian alliance was dissolved. With the overthrow of Pangalos in Greece in 1926, the idea of Greek-British cooperation on the improvement of the navy arose so that even the turmoil in the Greek economy did not prevent the steps taken in January 1927 for the development of the navy. During this period, due to economic difficulties, Greece chose to repair its naval vessels rather than

³¹ Tunaboylu, *ibid*, p. 780.

³² The *établi* / resident issue has frequently brought the two countries into confrontation.

³³ Çağla D. Tağmat, "İki Savaş Arası Dönemde Ege'de Yunan-İtalyan Tehdidi ve Savaş Gerilimi (1924-1925)", *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları*, Issue 44, 2023, pp. 34-37.

³⁴ Tağmat, *ibid*, p. 41.

³⁵ Salamis, a warship built in Germany in 1912 and purchased by Greece in 1913 in response to the Ottoman state's acceleration of naval armament after the 1897 Ottoman-Greek war.

³⁶ Zisis Fotakis, "Greek Navy Policy and Strategy 1923-1932", s. 15, https://nausivios.hna.gr/docs/e4_2010.pdf. Accessed: February 13, 2024.

purchasing new items.³⁷ The breaking point in the Greek naval forces occurred in 1928 when Venizelos came to power. There was a breakthrough in the training of the naval forces. The Venizelos period between 1928 and 1932, was characterized as a “golden age” in Greece. Greece entered a period of rapid rehabilitation and development. This period was marked by a series of changes from education to industry, from economy to banking business.³⁸

Same years were also a period of radical change for Türkiye, where innovation movements were on the agenda in every field. While the maritime sector had stagnated due to the difficult conditions of the Armistice period, the government was preparing for breakthroughs in this field as well. In the early years of the Republic, the Haliç Shipyard could not be used due to the restrictive provisions of the Straits Convention signed in Lausanne, and the *Marmara Üssü Babri (Marmara Naval Base) ve Kocaeli Müstahkem Mevki Komutanlığı (Kocaeli Fortified Area Command)* was established in İzmit in order to overcome the military weakness.

On the other hand, the state of the navy was not very good. *Yavuz* had been hit by three mines during the World War I and needed serious repairs.³⁹ Türkiye, in a rehabilitation phase, unlike Greece, could not afford to invest in new ships due to economic difficulties as it had come out of a hard war. On the other hand, according to Fevzi Pasha, the Chief of General Staff in this period, there was no need for large vessels and land forces were more important.⁴⁰

The issue of repairing the ships, which had become a necessity, came to the agenda in 1924, and the budget for repairing the damaged vessels, including *Yavuz*,⁴¹ was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly.⁴² This paved the way for the establishment of the Ministry of Naval Affairs in January

³⁷ Fotakis, *ibid*, p. 16.

³⁸ Nikolaos Emm. Papadakis, *Eleftherios Venizelos: O Anthropos, O İğetis*, Tomos 2, Estia, Athina, p. 939.

³⁹ Figen Atabey, “Cumhuriyet Donanması'nın Oluşum ve Gelişim Süreci (1923-1938)”, *Selçuk Türkiyat*, Sayı 59, Ekim 2023, pp. 322-323.

⁴⁰ Ahmet Mehmetefendioğlu-Cemal Necip Gürel, “Yavuz-Havuz Davası”, *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, Eylül 2004, Yıl 7, Sayı XIX, p. 238, Fevzi Çakmak wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on June 20, 1925, stating that even if Yavuz was repaired, the Turkish naval power could not reach the same level as that of Greece, and that even if it was repaired, an agreement on the limitation of naval armaments should be concluded with Greece. Tuğba Belenli, “Yavuz Zırhlısı ve Tamirinin Türk-Yunan İlişkilerine Etkisi”, *Belleken*, Volume 83, Issue 297, August 2019, p. 704.

⁴¹ See Appendix Picture IV.

⁴² Mehmetefendioğlu- Gürel, *ibid*, p. 239.

1925.⁴³ In 1926, the first step towards the repair of the *Yavuz* was taken with an attempt to cooperate with Germany and France, but the process did not end successfully⁴⁴ due to technical problems and corruption allegations against the Ali İhsan Eryavuz, Deputy Minister of Navy.⁴⁵ However, when the repair of *Yavuz* and even the development of the Turkish navy came into question in Türkiye in 1928 and 1929, Greece began to perceive this as a threat.

Greece's Reaction and Retaliation to Turkish Naval Buildup

Sharing the two sides of the Aegean Sea, Türkiye and Greece closely monitored each other's naval developments, as they did in almost every other area. In this context, military inventories were of interest to both states. Moreover, at no point in history had a war between the two states been the final war. Although the time and cause were uncertain, war could break out again in the Eastern Mediterranean. For many states, the years of peace during the interwar period were merely a respite before a new war.

Yavuz became more of a concern for Greece in 1927 when a group of Greek naval officers held a meeting in violation of military regulations and submitted a report to the Ministry of the Navy. In the report, the officers called the repair of Yavuz a “national danger” and “a matter for the future”, and when they did not receive the attention they expected from the ministry, they submitted the report to the Greek President instead.⁴⁶

This meeting was also mentioned in a letter sent from the Turkish Embassy in Athens to Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras. In the report, it was stated that efforts were being made to ensure and maintain Greek supremacy in the Aegean and measures such as the urgent reinforcement of Greek naval power and the need to repair the battleship Limni became the main topics.⁴⁷

In 1929, in late January, *The Montreal Daily News*, a Canadian newspaper, reported that the developments in the Turkish navy were causing concern in Greece; the battleship Yavuz was described as the ship that led Türkiye to enter the World War I, and it was stated that the fact that the repair of Yavuz was very disturbing for Greece. Another detail in the article was the possibility that this situation could lead to the signing of a security treaty between the two

⁴³ Atabey, *ibid*, pp. 320, 322.

⁴⁴ Belenli, *ibid*, p. 706.

⁴⁵ For details of the corruption case known as the Yavuz-Havuz case, see. Mehmetefedioğlu-Gürel, *ibid*, pp. 240-256.

⁴⁶ Belenli, *ibid*, p. 710.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 711.

countries. It was also suggested that if such a treaty were signed, a security area could be created that would include both nations. In addition, the article included the views of Venizelos, who stated that Greece had no claims in Anatolia and that the Turkish navy already had sufficient forces to defend Anatolia, not only against Greece but also against the great powers.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, some articles in the Greek press that reminds readers of the Greek *Megali Idea* were met with reactions in Türkiye. *Constantinople* –a Greek newspaper- stated that a Greek national state could not be imagined without Thrace, Çanakkale, and even Istanbul, and that economic conditions, in addition to historical background, had driven and even provoked the Greeks toward the Bosphorus.⁴⁹

These statements were crucial in showing that the spirit of the *Megali Idea* was still alive in Greece and that the aim was not only to expand into Anatolia but also to pursue economic interests. During this period, Greece was seeking ways to improve its economy due to challenges related to the exchange of populations and the ongoing rehabilitation process. On the other hand, the loans that Greece had received from the Allied States since 1919 for the Anatolian campaign had multiplied exponentially, and the loans received for the exchangees were added to this. On the other hand, Necmettin Sadak, a columnist for the daily *Akşam*, reported that Venizelos had made a proposal to the Turkish Government to limit armament, and stated that limiting the Turkish navy was out of the question because the Turkish coastline was too long, the Turkish navy was stronger than the Greek navy, and Greece had become stronger with the repair of the battleship *Averof*.⁵⁰

It was natural for two neighboring states bordering the Aegean to try to improve their naval armaments and navies in order to protect their security. However, what made this reaction abnormal was the mutual distrust between them. Even though all the problems seemed to have been resolved with the Lausanne Peace Treaty, it appeared difficult for Türkiye and Greece to unite on common ground to solve the issues related to migrants. While this issue was already on the agenda of both countries, the issue of armament was perceived personally by each side.

⁴⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Dışişleri Bakanlığı Türk Diplomatik Arşivi (Republic of Türkiye General Directorate of State Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Turkish Diplomatic Archives) TDA, 503/87909/320483/179.

⁴⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 22 Mart 1929.

⁵⁰ TDA, 503/87909/320483/179.

During this period, Greece invited a British delegation to help improve its naval forces and decided that a Greek delegation would go to Germany. While Greece was planning to order light and fast ships, the British delegation was planning to revise the Greek navy. The British delegation would develop a plan after conducting observations. Meanwhile, Germany was also contacted for the repair of the *Salamis*.⁵¹ Perhaps one of the issues that worried Greece was the involvement of Italy in the development of the Turkish navy. *Vakit* newspaper emphasized that Italy's involvement was nothing more than a commercial matter. Another point emphasized by the newspaper was that the existence of a treaty signed between Italy and Greece in 1928 was an indication that Türkiye and Greece would reconcile and that a policy against Greece would not be pursued. However, Greece was still uncomfortable with Italy's cooperation with Türkiye and decided to strengthen its navy by ordering naval ships from Britain and France.⁵² At the same time, the British press was closely following the situation. Among the reports was news that Greece had purchased two warships, and Türkiye was preparing a new naval program and had even ordered new ships from Italy. Another noteworthy detail was the Greek press's provocative publications regarding the Aegean.⁵³

Despite all this, with the “Treaty on the Abandonment of the Use of War as an Instrument of National Policy” signed in 1928 and accepted by Türkiye, both sides undertook to condemn the resort to war for the settlement of international problems or disputes and to abandon the use of war as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations.⁵⁴ This was a move that reflected Türkiye's general foreign policy and revealed the foreign policy understanding of the Atatürk era. Nevertheless, Greece continued to take the steps which Türkiye took to modernize its navy personally and kept its security paranoia alive. During this period, when the Greek press closely followed naval developments in Türkiye, it is possible to say that Greece's naval inventory was also a topic of discussion. In particular, the newspaper *Vradini* used critical language about the government's naval policy, emphasizing the need to train navy personnel rather than focusing on the acquisition of ships, and questioning the quality of the personnel who would manage the navy. The

⁵¹ *Vakit*, 27 Mayıs 1929.

⁵² *Vakit*, 8 Haziran 1929.

⁵³ *Manchester Guardian*, 29 May 1929.

⁵⁴ İsmail Soysal, *Tarihçeleri ve Açıklamaları ile Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları*, 1. Cilt (1920-1945), Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2000, p. 371.

article, which contained self-criticism, underlined the lack of organization and held the government responsible for it.⁵⁵

At a time when Türkiye was rumored to have ordered new naval vessels from Italy, European states were expecting a similar move from Greece.⁵⁶ International interest in Türkiye's orders was also high. According to the Greek newspaper *Ethnos*, Türkiye's new naval program had caused unrest in the Mediterranean, and public opinion was uneasy about the idea that Türkiye was arming itself in preparation for a pre-planned war.⁵⁷

Ellinikos Tabidromos, a Greek newspaper, wrote that armament, even if pursued for sincere reasons such as security concerns, would provoke a state's neighbors and mutually sour relations. Describing it as a commonplace for foreign industrial enterprises or arms suppliers to encourage governments to arm themselves, the newspaper underlined that Greece had recently come under British scrutiny. However, it also suggested that it could be perceived as a threatening development that it would be difficult to restrain the Greeks after the rapid and hasty implementation of Türkiye's maritime plan. Unlike the opposition newspapers, *Ellinikos Tabidromos* characterized Greek naval power as complete and superior, and emphasized that the rulers in Ankara were terrified. In the same article, the newspaper also referred to the Lausanne Peace Treaty, making the assertive claim that this treaty could not resolve the problems in the east.⁵⁸ Another Greek newspaper *Embros*, on the other hand, claimed that Salamis could only be launched in 1931 and that the Greek naval power was weak. According to the newspaper, Türkiye had the initiative in the seas due to its geographical location.⁵⁹

Venizelos' radio speech, which was reflected in Greek newspapers, revealed his fears about Türkiye's naval policy. Venizelos stated that the Greek government had applied to Türkiye on several occasions and asked Türkiye to limit its efforts to strengthen the navy, but Türkiye, far from accepting this, had ordered new warships. He added that this was also the reason for Greece's need to reinforce its fleet. Venizelos explained that Türkiye had recently ordered ships of various qualities from Italy and the Netherlands, and Greece was also taking similar initiatives. The Greek Prime Minister said that Türkiye's tendency

⁵⁵ *Vradini*, 31 Maiou/ May 1929.

⁵⁶ *Ethnos*, 20 Maiou /May 1929.

⁵⁷ *Ellinikos Tabidromos*, 28 Maiou /May 1929.

⁵⁸ *Ellinikos Tabidromos*, 28 Maiou /May 1929.

⁵⁹ *Embros*, 26 Septemvriou /September 1929.

to develop its navy was directed against Greece, adding that relations between the two countries have become tense.⁶⁰

In a statement made by Kazım (Karabekir) Paşa, the President of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, in response to the anxiety that emerged in Greece and the tension created by this anxiety, he stated that Türkiye's naval orders were not for war, but to prevent war, and that he did not think that Venizelos had made a statement about the danger of war.⁶¹ It was an interesting detail that on the same day that this news was published in the Turkish press, the statement made by the Greek Admiral Dusmanis also appeared in the Turkish press. General Admiral Dusmanis answered questions about the Turkish threat in the Aegean and said that in case of a Turkish attack on the islands, they would try to prevent this attack and stated that they would order new ships. Emphasizing that the battleship Salamis should be developed against the battleship Yavuz, the Greek Admiral said that a lot of money was spent on the repair of *Averof*.⁶² Shortly afterwards, it was reported that the Greek government had given up buying the battleship *Salamis* because it would take two years to repair her,⁶³ and although *Salamis* was likely to be the most powerful ship in the Mediterranean with the planned repairs, it was found that it would cost £3 million⁶⁴ to renovate.⁶⁵

In August 1929, Türkiye began maneuvers in the Mediterranean with a seven-piece fleet.⁶⁶ The issue was also brought to the Greek parliament. In his speech in the parliament, Venizelos expressed his confidence that Türkiye was a pacifist and underlined that they were obliged to make peace with Türkiye. He also stated that the repair of Yavuz created an anti-Turkish atmosphere in the country and was interpreted as Türkiye preparing to attack Greece.⁶⁷ In September 1929, Venizelos' meeting with British officials in Genoa resulted in Venizelos receiving British support for the possibility of a war.⁶⁸ A similar

⁶⁰ *Vakit*, 11 Haziran 1929.

⁶¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 13 Haziran 1929.

⁶² *Hakimiyet-i Millîye*, 13 Haziran 1929.

⁶³ *Akşam*, 12 Temmuz 1929.

⁶⁴ The Greek newspaper *Vradini* gave the amount of money needed for the repair of Salamis as 1 million 300 thousand pounds. *Vradini*, 23 Oktovriou/ October 1929.

⁶⁵ *Akşam*, 7 Eylül 1929.

⁶⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 18 Ağustos 1929.

⁶⁷ *Akşam*, 16 Şubat 1930.

⁶⁸ *The Star*, 9 September 1929.

news was also published in the *Patris*. According to the news, the Greek government was following the situation carefully and had decided to determine a new naval program after consulting all competent authorities. It was also stated that Venizelos had received British support against a possible Turkish attack.⁶⁹ Indeed, the news in the Greek press at the end of September supported this uneasiness. The seizure of Eastern Macedonia and the Aegean islands, as well as Western Thrace, was emphasized as the goal of Türkiye, which had risen from the ashes, to re-establish itself in Europe.⁷⁰

On the other hand, the perception of Türkiye as a threat to the islands was not a new issue. During the period when the *Yavuz* battleship was being repaired, former Greek Navy Minister Dusmanis made a statement on the matter, linking the repair of *Yavuz* to Türkiye's invasion plans for the islands. He emphasized that the most effective battleship against *Yavuz* would be the *Salamis*, and stated that a solution should be found to increase the *Salamis'* speed to match that of *Yavuz*.⁷¹

The fact that *Yavuz*'s repair is back on the agenda has raised fears in Greece this time. The fact that Türkiye would add a 26,000 ton battleship with a speed of 28 knots to its navy within a year led to comparisons with *Averof*. *Averof* had a speed of 22 mph and the *Kilkis* in the Greek navy could only reach 16 mph. *Yavuz* was therefore the fastest battleship of the period. The general perception in Greece was that Türkiye was threatening and pressuring with its naval power. It was around this time that news started to emerge that Venizelos was working to buy two large warships. But there was another problem. Greece was not supported by any of its allies. The fact that there was no other ship equal to *Yavuz* doubled the problem. On the other hand, even if a modern warship was ordered at that moment, it would take three years to be delivered and would be very expensive. This led to the Greek government's decision to start work on the repair of the *Salamis* quickly. A group of Greek naval officers even traveled to Germany to discuss how to overhaul the existing ships. For the Greeks, every passing day would have delayed the acquisition of a good battleship.⁷² *Akşam* newspaper also included the news in the Greek press and mentioned the fear of the Greeks that *Yavuz* would raid the islands. The newspaper, which stated that the construction of *Salamis* was unfinished and that it was kept in

⁶⁹ *Patris*, 8 Septemvriou /September 1929.

⁷⁰ *Embros*, 30 Septemvriou / September 1929.

⁷¹ Belenli, *ibid*, p. 712-713.

⁷² *Vradini*, 24 Oktovriou /October 1929.

the water in the form of a boat, underlined that this ship was inferior in capacity to *Yavuz*.⁷³

In the days when dissenting voices were increasingly heard in Greece, which once had an ambitious navy, comments began to be heard that the Pangalos coup in 1925 had blunted the navy and even led to a decline in the quality of its officers. Especially the newspaper *Vradini* blamed the Venizelos government for the inadequacy of the navy and heavily criticized the fact that the navy had not recruited people who would serve properly. Naval personnel, described as holding high ranks but lacking competence, also received their share of these harsh criticisms.⁷⁴

By the end of 1929, the general atmosphere in Greece was more peaceful, though they had not given up their efforts to strengthen their navy. On the other hand, their decision to abandon the purchase of Salamis was due to the fact that this battleship was not as advanced as *Yavuz*. It was decided to reinforce the light fleet and air force with the money planned to be spent on Salamis. On the other hand, the removal of ships that were not capable of fighting from the navy was also considered.⁷⁵ Hence, it is understood that Greece was ready to implement a complete renewal plan for its naval forces.

Diplomatic Solution of the Problem: 1930 Greek-Turkish Treaty of Friendship, Neutrality, Conciliation and Arbitration

While issues concerning the naval affairs were unfolding, discussions about the population exchange were also ongoing. It could even be said that the population exchange issue was at the center of Turkish-Greek relations until the 1930's. Between 1926 and 1930, much of the turmoil in Turkish-Greek relations revolved around the problems arising from the population exchange. The fact that this issue remained unresolved, along with the diplomatic challenges both states faced, led them to perceive each other as threats in domestic politics and in the steps taken toward modernization. The positive steps taken by Italy toward Türkiye and Greece after 1928 also contributed to the rapprochement process between the two countries. On the other hand, Venizelos, in his speech to the Greek Parliament on February 10, 1930, emphasized the need for more light troops and aircraft for the defense of the country, referring to Türkiye's efforts to repair the *Yavuz*. He asserted that the Turks were peaceful and added that the best policy would be for both countries to agree to limit naval armament. Venizelos' moderate remarks about Türkiye

⁷³ *Akşam*, 20 Eylül 1929.

⁷⁴ *Vradini*, 28 Oktovriou /October 1929.

⁷⁵ *Akşam*, 22 Teşrin-i sani 1929.

suggested that a compromise on the population exchange issue was being reached. Indeed, the main issue that caused tension between Türkiye and Greece into tension during this period was the problems arising from the population exchange. The fact that these problems could not be resolved for a long time caused other issues between the two countries to become tense, and different situations could be perceived as threats. Taking the first step towards solving the main problem was a starting point for the resolution of other problems. The first step in this regard was taken on June 10, 1930 and a realistic attempt was made to solve all the problems arising from the population exchange. While the signed agreement envisaged the determination of the value of the immovable properties of the exchanged persons and the mutual determination of this value and the implementation of the population exchange method, the need for a mixed commission on that affair (*Muhtelit Mübadele Komisyonu*) would gradually begin to disappear.⁷⁶

In the following period, Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos paid a visit to Türkiye between October 27-31, 1930 upon the call of İsmet Pasha and visited Ankara with the aim of solving the ongoing and remaining problems.⁷⁷ On October 28, 1930, a treaty of friendship, neutrality, conciliation, and arbitration was signed in Ankara.⁷⁸ Especially the protocol at the end of the treaty put an end to the issue of naval armament, which had been on the agenda of Türkiye and Greece from 1927 until the end of 1929. Therefore, in accordance with the term “friendship” in the name of the treaty, the issue of naval armament, which had been perceived as a mutual threat for the last two years, was clarified.

On October 30, 1930, the protocol at the end of the Turkish-Greek Treaty of Friendship, Neutrality, Conciliation and Arbitration signed between Türkiye and Greece included the following statements:⁷⁹

“The High Contracting Parties, inspired by the principles that led to the conclusion of the present Treaty of Amity and Arbitration, and wishing to avoid unnecessary increases in naval armament expenditures, agree to work together toward a parallel limitation of each other's forces, taking into account the special circumstances of each party. In order to provide both Governments with the opportunity to prevent a naval arms race through a frank and friendly exchange of views and information, they undertake not to

⁷⁶ *Vakit*, 12 Haziran 1930.

⁷⁷ Temuçin Faik Ertan- Bahattin Demirtaş, *Türkiye'yi Ziyaret Eden Yabancı Devlet Adamlarının Ankara Günleri (1923-1960)*, Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları Vekam, İstanbul, 2022, pp. 46-61.

⁷⁸ Soysal, *ibid*, pp. 399-404.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 404.

order, acquire, or construct any warship or armament without giving six months' notice to the other.”

According to the additional protocol, it was aimed at preventing unnecessary expenditure for naval weapons. Especially considering the current conjuncture, it can be said that the existing protocol was aimed at achieving a multifaceted goal in this process, which also took into account the effects of the World Economic Crisis of 1929. The first of these was to reduce the negative effects of the World Economic Crisis that affected Europe and shook the trade and economic dynamics of both countries. In fact, the so-called naval armament was not limited to weapons. Although disarmament was on the agenda in terms of the purchase of different types of modern naval vessels, the situation was slightly different for Türkiye and Greece, which share the two sides of the Aegean. On the one hand Italy, which saw the Mediterranean as an area of expansion, posed a threat to both countries. Also, the steps taken by Türkiye and Greece in terms of armament caused both countries to see each other as a threat. Therefore, both the acquisition of new equipment or ships and the repair of existing ones required serious investments. In 1930, when the impact of the 1929 crisis was clearly felt, it was not surprising that this issue was addressed. In addition to this, the possibility that the problems related to the population exchange would be resolved and disappear, would automatically dissolve other problems. For political détente and even friendship made it unnecessary to arm against each other. After the signing of the treaty, Venizelos expressed his thoughts on the subject with the following words: “*I am not philosophizing, the world is wiser now. If all the work we put into this treaty had been wasted, I would have doubted the wisdom of humanity.*”⁸⁰

The protocol in the Treaty signed in Ankara obliged both states, before making any war expenditure or placing an order, to clarify whether the undertaking had a hostile intent toward the other side. This was a very important responsibility. However, it should be emphasized that the protocol did not prohibit armaments, as the threat from Italy remained for both countries. The protocol on naval armament was the culmination of Venizelos' policy on this issue. It ended the long-standing Turkish-Greek rivalry on naval armaments with a friendly exchange of views and statements, conducted in a spirit of complete cordiality.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 31 Teşrinievvel 1930.

⁸¹ Haral. G. Nikolaou, *Diethneis Politikes kai Stratiotikes Synthikes-Symfonies kai Symbaseis apo 1453 Melri Simera*, Ekdoseis Floros, Athina, 1996, p. 350.

Conclusion

The problems between Türkiye and Greece, especially following the Lausanne Peace Treaty, presented a multi-layered and intricate outlook. Therefore, resolving the issues arising from the Treaty of Lausanne did not happen suddenly. In particular, the *établi* problem, stemming from the population exchange, became the main determinant in Turkish-Greek relations, and the tension it created led to various sensitivities in both countries. The issue of naval armament was one of them.

The World War I proved that those who dominated the seas were successful. Additionally, the air force and its instruments were quite new at the time. The history of the navy, on the other hand, was centuries old. Gaining a dominant position in the Mediterranean and the Aegean depended on having a strong navy. Although disarmament and anti-war sentiments became significant topics after the World War I, the situation was different for Türkiye and Greece. Türkiye undertook a series of modernisation measures one after another, focusing on making breakthroughs in its navy. Similarly, the situation in Greece was no different. The defeat in Anatolia had quickly begun to affect the internal dynamics of Greece. Furthermore, the Italian threat in the Mediterranean was a factor that neither Greece nor Türkiye could ignore Türkiye, given their geographical proximity to Italy.

In the interwar period, or the so-called Versailles Order, with the emergence of two revisionist states, Italy and Germany, "national defense" became a priority for regional states. During this time, preserving the status quo meant not attacking but defending, or more precisely, responding to an attack. Additionally, the navy was a military force that projected a state's presence and sovereignty to the outside world, not only in wartime but also in peacetime. There is no doubt that warships are the military vehicles on which a country's flag and other symbols of sovereignty are most visible. In other words, the navy demonstrates not only a state's military power but also its political and commercial strength.

In such a period, it became important for Türkiye and Greece to balance each other and prevent attacks from other states. The naval forces had a vital importance for the defense of countries in a period when armored and motorized forces increased on land and the offensive capabilities of states increased with the establishment of air forces. For Türkiye and Greece, both of them surrounded by seas on three sides, the Aegean Sea was the middle territorial waters of both countries and the only sea their navies would meet, leaving aside their inland seas and other seas they did not border (Marmara Sea, Black Sea, Adriatic Sea, Ionian Sea). It was not a matter of comfort, but a

necessity of geography, history and realpolitik for Türkiye and Greece to attach importance to naval power, to follow each other in this field and to invest in their navies accordingly. As a matter of fact, this is what happened.

From this point of view, Türkiye's focus on naval armament, in line with both domestic and foreign policy, was naturally watched carefully by Greece. This was also influenced by the fact that Türkiye gave up its sovereignty over a significant part of the Aegean islands in the Treaty of Lausanne. Therefore, every step Türkiye took in the field of naval and naval armament was evaluated as an Aegean-oriented syndrome. The process of repairing the battleship Yavuz was also met with concern in Greece due to this situation and caused the Greek administration to take counter moves. The fact that the Greek administration and the press made panicked counter-discourses without any negative discourse or steps taken by Türkiye against Greece on this issue was a result of the fact that the existing problems had reached an impasse and were far from being solved. In this context, the fact that both sides turned to naval armament with counter moves became a side problem that was fed by the existing problem, namely the problems arising from the population exchange.

Furthermore, naval armament led these two countries, which had not yet established their own naval industries at that time, to contact European states for the purchase of dreadnoughts and battleships. In other words, this competition between Türkiye and Greece whetted the appetite of European states to sell naval vessels to these two states. So at the beginning of 1930, the Turkish and Greek administrations' focus on resolving the complicated *établissement* issue opened an important window of opportunity.

It is a fact that Türkiye and Greece, which remained at war until 1922 after the World War I, did not turn to an adventurous foreign policy during the Interwar Period. For this reason, in the days when they were trying to solve the Population Exchange problem in accordance with international law, it was a requirement of rational policy that they focused on defensive spending rather than military offensive. Moreover, the World Economic Crisis that broke out in 1929 made it necessary for these two states to become militarily strong at low cost or to maintain their current situation. In this process, symbols for both states came to the fore in the naval forces. Yavuz and Averof, which almost became the naval icons of the World War I, were perhaps more on the agenda than the hot war days and became relatively low-cost competitive elements of the mutual moves of the states.

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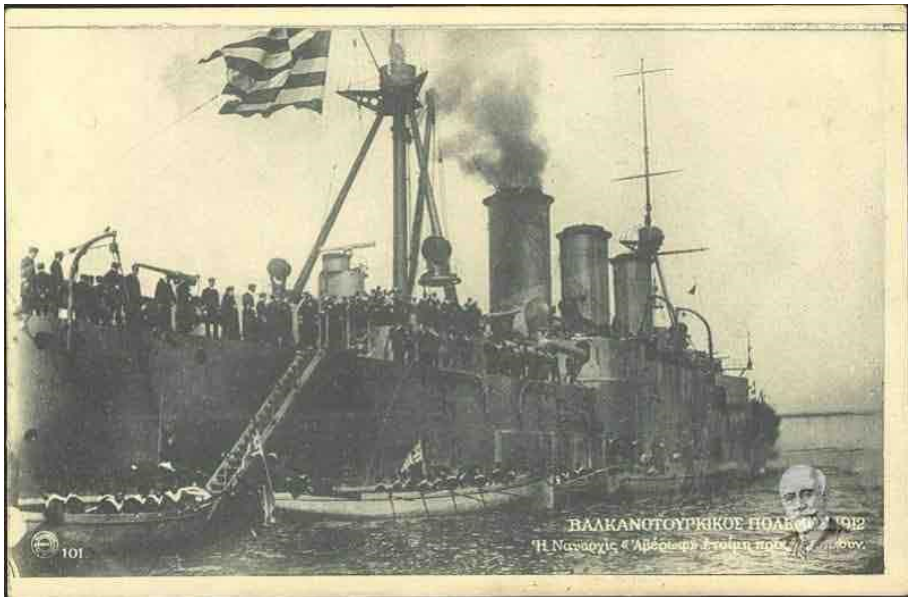
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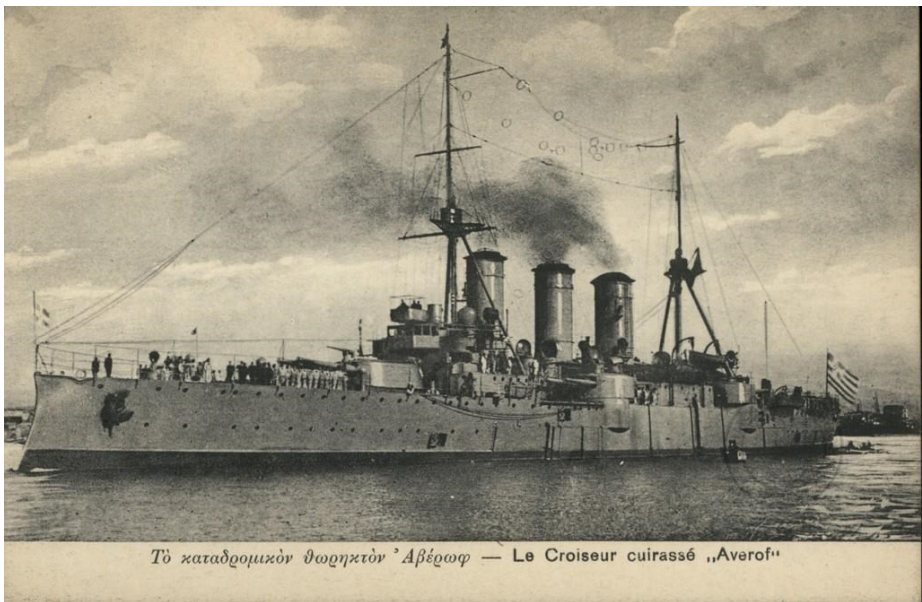
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Appendix



Picture I. Averof during Balkan Wars, (Benaki Museum, File 09, Album 033-573)



Picture II. A postcard with a photo of *Averof*, (Benaki Museum, File 11, Album 46-031)



Picture III. The battleship Yavuz on maneuvers. (*Ankara University The Institute of Turkish Revolution History Archive - TİTE-K24G28B28*)



Picture IV. After the evacuation of Istanbul, the Battleship Yavuz, lying wounded in front of Bebek in the Bosphorus, was on its way to Izmit for repairs. (*Ankara University The Institute of Turkish Revolution History Archive -TİTE-K27G56B56*)