

For the Defence of the British Empire: Edwin Montagu and the Turkish Peace Settlement in a Transnational Context

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse the position of Edwin Montagu, the renowned British politician and the Secretary of State for India between 1917 and 1922, towards the Turkish peace settlement in the post-war period. Montagu supported the fair treatment of Turkey by the Allies, reflecting a deep discrepancy within the British policy making given the stern anti-Turkish positions of the Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Foreign Office headed by George Curzon. This study suggests that Montagu's ideas regarding Turkey were shaped by the necessities that his job entailed – to keep the British Raj intact – as millions of Muslims living in India were highly interested in the future of the Caliphate and organized under the banner of Khilafat Movement. Thus, this article emphasizes that the attitude of Montagu was closely related to the defence of the British Empire although the British interests were formulated differently by the different organs of the state. In this respect, the Secretary's political duty to serve the national interests in an anxious international and transnational setting made him pro-Turkish in a compulsory way, leading to his eventual forced resignation in 1922.

Key Words: Edwin Montagu, The Treaty of Sevres, Khilafat Movement, Turkish War of Independence, transnationalism

Introduction

When the Ottomans signed the Mudros Armistice in October 1918, the renowned "Eastern Question" of the West had entered its final phase. Both before and during the Great War, the Ottomans had already lost bulk of lands in the Balkans and Arab populated regions. In the post-war period, the majority of the remaining Ottoman territories, including its capital city Istanbul, were occupied by the Entente armies. It may well be suggested that the empire had de facto collapsed in 1918, although the official end would come in 1922, with the decision of the Turkish Grand National Assembly over the abolition of the Sultanate.

This article deals with what happened in between, namely 1918 and 1922, based on the position of Edwin Montagu, the British Secretary of State for India, towards the British plans for the Turkish peace settlement. In this respect, it aims to show Montagu's opposition to the stern anti-Turkish position of the British Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs George Curzon, examining the official correspondences. It argues that Montagu's 'pro-Turkish' attitude was strictly related to the politics in India at the time. On the one hand, the Indian Muslims under the banner of the Khilafat started to pursue an active policy towards the Caliphate in Istanbul, the future of which was unclear. On the other hand, the national and international developments, specifically the Turkish case, constituted a pretext for an alliance between the Hindus and the Muslims based on an anti-colonial understanding, being a potential danger to the British rule in India. Thus, Montagu compulsorily became an advocate of Turkey since he acted on a fragile international and transnational setting. He frequently challenged and criticized the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that eventually led to his forced resignation in 1922.

Although the subject of this article seems somehow parochial, it actually transcends the story of one man who opposed his own government's views. This situation makes the ideas of Montagu important for several reasons. First, this narrative is a significant example showing that the Turkish peace settlement was both a national and transnational issue as the connection

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of the Indian Muslims with Turkey reveals. Second, it depicts well how this transnational setting had the power to shape the views of a cabinet member, creating disunity within the British state regarding the Turkish peace settlement. Third, the correspondences of Montagu have the ability to set forth the evolution of Turkey's international position that gradually disrupted the Allied unity as a result of the success of the War of Independence (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*).

Since this article analyses the views of Montagu towards Turkey which were mostly shaped by a transnational setting, it will first deal with the possible novel ways of addressing the post-war Turkish history. Then, it will show the Allied discussions that supported the expulsion of the Turks from Istanbul and Montagu's opposition to such a decision, with regard to the challenge of the rising Khilafat activity in and outside of India. Thereafter, Montagu's ideas about the revision of the Turkish settlement will be analysed in relation to the success of the Kemalist movement. Last, the final remarks will emphasize how the attitude of one cabinet member towards the Turkish settlement actually indicates broader issues, from the disunity within the British government in the post-war period to the transnational nature of the Turkish national movement.

Necessity for New Approaches to the Post-War Turkish History

Margaret Macmillan, in her famous book *Paris 1919* rightly writes that there were two conflictual realities in 1919: one was taking place in Paris in which the peace discussions were held while the other was materialized in the places where people were making their own decisions and fighting their own battles.² Actually, the Turkish case is one of the most outstanding examples of this statement, as the Turks refused the impositions of the winners and created their own path with the War of Independence.

It is possible to analyse the Turkish War of Independence from different lenses. On the one hand, it is the Turkish national movement headed by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) that resisted the occupation of the Entente powers in Turkey; refused the Treaty of Sevres; and constituted the independent Turkish state based on Anatolia, as a result of the final nationalist victory of 1922. On the other hand, it is a process through which the war against the Entente powers went hand in hand with the creation of the new Turkish nation-state in place of the Ottoman Empire, making this period the last phase of the transformation of Turkey from an empire to republic.

Regardless of the perspective, one should emphasize that the Turkish War of Independence – or the post-war period of Turkey in general terms – has usually been analysed within the confines of modern Turkey, and mostly under the framework of diplomatic and/or international history until the 21st century. However, thanks to the rise of transnational³ history as well as the increasing number of academic works emphasizing transnational relations, the historiography of the Turkish War of Independence started to be diversified. For instance, in his work "The Other Jihad" Alp Yenen shows the "global moment" of imperial penetration of

² Margaret Macmillan, *Barış Yapanlar, Dünyayı Değiştiren 6 Ay*, (İstanbul: Alfa, 2015), p. 23

³ In this article transnational is used within two related contexts. First use is the transnational history. It is not easy to make a clear-cut definition of transnational history. Yet, in this article, the term transnational history means the narratives, concepts or phenomena that transcend the national borders, and looks at interconnections between the boundaries. See, Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1-18. The second use is the transnational relations, which as Nye and Keohane suggested, "contacts, coalitions, and interactions across the state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments", meaning that the actors in transnational relations should be composed of state and non-state actors. Joseph S. Nye and Robert O. Keohane, "Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction," *International Organization* 25, no. 3 (1971), pp. 330-31.

the Muslim world that resulted in the interrelated Muslim anti-colonialism, which led to several revolts and resistance movements in Egypt, Turkey, Afghanistan and India,⁴ emphasizing the interconnectedness of these movements. Apart from the reference to interconnectedness, Tutku Vardağlı in her study on the Lausanne Conference shows that the Turkish delegation dealt not only with the state but also with the non-state actors, displaying how the delegation conducted its "international", and "transnational" relations.⁵

These studies on Turkey emphasizing the connections between the borders are likely to increase in the next decade given the rising popularity of transnational and global history. These different approaches are also relevant for this article. Although the focal point of this study is Edward Montagu's position towards the Turkish peace settlement, analysis of his political standing needs to take the transnational setting on which he acted into consideration. On the one hand, the Indian Muslims, who had come together under the Khilafat Movement, were binding Turkey to India, thus to Montagu, based on Muslim nationalism. On the other hand, the initiatives that the Khilafat undertook, from sending petitions to the European capitals to attempting to join the sessions of the Paris Peace Conference on behalf of the Caliphate constituted transnational relations. The effort of the group specifically with the rise of nationalism in India, in return, became one of the factors that determined the position of Montagu who challenged his own cabinet with a discourse of protecting the interests of the empire. In the next part, the interaction between the parties and impact of this interaction on Montagu's position in the context of the future of Istanbul will be analysed.

"Disastrous and Incredible": Expulsion of the Turks from Istanbul

The political interaction between the Muslims of India and the Ottoman Caliphate in Istanbul is not restricted to the twentieth century or the Khilafat movement. In the late nineteenth century, pan-Islamist policies of Sultan Abdülhamit II towards the Muslims of the world also targeted India, which created discontent among the British officials.⁶ However, although this interaction continued after the Hamidian era in different contexts, such as the Balkan Wars,⁷ the Indian Muslims contributed to the war efforts of the British during the First World War.

According to Koloğlu, the position of the Indian Muslims was not affected by the Jihad call of the Ottomans because of the British promises made to them during the war.⁸ However, the post-war period changed their position and they started to organize under the framework of the Khilafat movement. Their foremost aim was to support the Ottoman Empire before the peace conference to make sure that the Caliphate would be fairly treated as the British had

⁴ Alp Yenen, "The Other Jihad: Enver Pasha, Bolsheviks, and Politics of Anticolonial Muslim Nationalism during the Baku Congress 1920," in *The First World War and Its Aftermath: The Shaping of the Middle East*, edited by Fraser T. G., (London: Gingko, 2015), pp. 275-276.

⁵ E. Tutku Vardağlı, "Transnational Issues, Non-governmental Organizations and the Genesis of Modern Turkish Diplomacy," in *A Transnational Account of Turkish Foreign Policy* edited by H. Papuççular and D. Kuru (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 97-120.

⁶ For more information, see Selim Deringil, "Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 3 (1991), pp. 345-59.

⁷ For an important study on this topic see, Burak Akçapar, *People's Mission to the Ottoman Empire: M.A. Ansari and Indian Medical Mission* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁸ The Muslims constituted the majority of the Indian troops in the British army. Orhan Koloğlu, "Religious Ties for Peace: India's Support in the Turkish War of Independence," in *38. Icanas: International Congress of Asian and North African Studies Proceedings* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2011), p. 985.

pledged during the war.⁹ However, the armistice and the discussions for the peace settlements were not showing any signs that the former pledges had been remembered by the British. Therefore, the Khilafat movement stood for the Ottomans, with different strategies, from sending petitions to the British officials and institutions, to lobbying for the Ottoman government in European capitals. Later on, they would also expand their support to the Turkish War of Independence.

However, although the originating point of the movement was the fate of the Caliphate, it should not be analysed solely based on the Ottomans either. Meleady argues that the Khilafat movement was "an important episode in the historiography of the Indian and Pakistani independence movements, and one in which the caliphate ostensibly plays the central role, but which modern scholarship has come to regard principally as uniquely Indian."¹⁰ That means, the Khilafat was also directly connected to the Indian politics, having major impact on the relationship of the Indian Muslims with both the British rule and the Hindus. The Khilafat aimed to obtain autonomy and independence for India, while it also wanted to increase the bargaining power of the Muslims vis-à-vis the Hindus.¹¹

Obviously, the post-war period was not the best years for British colonialism in India. The Indian nationalism was on the rise in an environment that the Wilsonian self-determination became a popular motto globally. This shift paved the way for the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms for the formation of self-governing mechanisms in India, even if in a limited way.¹² In these conditions of the post-war period, the anti-colonial attitude of the Indian Muslims posed a serious danger to the turbulent British rule in India. Thus, the Khilafat changed the mutual positions of the Muslims and the British to each other in a serious way. Yet, it also transformed the Muslim-Hindu relationship, leading to their alliance. In this "grand alliance", the Hindus, mostly led by the Indian National Congress, supported the Khilafat's efforts about the Ottoman Empire, while the Muslims did the same about the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi.¹³ The increasing alignment between these two communities became so troubling for the British that Montagu frequently emphasized in his memoranda prepared for the cabinet.

It is in these post-war conditions of India that the Allied powers started to negotiate the peace terms for Turkey. The future of the Turkish cities, specifically that of Istanbul, became one of the most important discussion topics of several meetings and conferences that the British held within their own institutions or with their allies. In December 1919, just a couple of days before an Anglo-French meeting that would be held at the British Foreign Office in order to discuss the Turkish peace settlement, Edwin Montagu wrote a memorandum to the cabinet, explaining his views. Montagu, in the memorandum, warned the cabinet that the Indian people, regardless of their ethnic or religious differences, were so united on the future of Turkey that could have the power to jeopardize the peace in the British Empire.¹⁴ The Secretary, not only

⁹ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997), pp. 189-190.

¹⁰ Conor, Meleady, "Negotiating the Caliphate: British Responses to Pan-Islamic Appeals, 1914-1924", *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no.2 (2016), p. 182.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.189.

¹² For a good analysis of these reforms see Philip Woods, "The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919): A Reassessment" *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 17, no.1 (1994), pp. 25-42.

¹³ M. Raisur Rahman, "We can Leave Neither": Mohamed Ali, Islam and Nationalism in Colonial India," *South Asian History and Culture* 3, no.2 (2012), p. 260.

¹⁴ "The Turkish Peace" in *Official: Cabinet: Various papers (5 February 1919-17 January 1920)*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/1), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F1> (accessed 20 May 2020).

in this memorandum but also in the subsequent memoranda and letters, referred to a particular statement that the Prime Minister Lloyd George had once made: "nor are we fighting to destroy Austria-Hungary or to deprive Turkey of its capital, or of the rich and renowned land of Asia Minor and Thrace, which are predominantly Turkish in race."¹⁵ This statement constituted the basis of Montagu's ideas regarding the Turkish settlement.

According to the Secretary of State for India, in case of expulsion of the Turks from Istanbul the danger would transcend the British Empire in Asia and disturb the British position throughout the Middle East since the Turks would join hands with the Bolsheviks and fight back many years.¹⁶ The then Secretary of State for Colonies, Lord Alfred Milner also agreed with the ideas of Montagu, suggesting that keeping the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul, Adrianople and Anatolia intact under the authority of the Sultan was the best option for Britain both for the sake of Egypt and of India.¹⁷

However, the Foreign Office as well the Prime Minister were of a totally different opinion regarding the Turkish settlement. The decisions taken during the abovementioned Anglo-French Conference several days after Montagu's memorandum became a real blow to the advocates of a less severe settlement for Turkey. In this conference, George Curzon and the then Secretary-General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Philip Berthelot compromised on the formation of two new states: one being in Istanbul – normally including the Straits – and the other being in a small part of Anatolia. While the former would be ruled by an international bloc, the latter would be governed by the Turks themselves, yet under international supervision.¹⁸ Although there were rejections to this plan even inside the conference, specifically related to the possible economic difficulties that the expulsion of the Turks from Istanbul could create, Curzon rigorously objected all of these arguments.¹⁹ According to the plan, Turkish capital would be either Bursa or Konya. While the French preferred Konya that was distant from Istanbul, with a rationale to suppress possible future Turkish aims to recapture the city; the British preferred Bursa which was closer to Istanbul, thus easier to control and dominate.²⁰ The British-French alliance was determined to expel the Turks from their capital city, and to turn the new Turkish state in Asia into a mandate.

This conference ignited a quarrel between Montagu and Curzon. In another memorandum dated January 1920, Montagu wrote "disastrous and incredible" for the decisions agreed upon in the Anglo-French Conference.²¹ He emphasized two points. On the one hand, he complained about the attitude of Curzon, who discarded other opinions without considering or discussing them. In this respect, the Secretary emphasized that these neglected views were coming from the "parts of the British Empire whose man power and resources were mainly responsible for the defeat of Turkey."²² On the other hand, he reiterated that the British security in India depended on the Turkish peace, which could lead to further military burden for Britain since

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Anglo-French Conference on the Turkish Settlement," in *Official: Cabinet: Various papers (5 February 1919-17 January 1920)*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/1), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F1> (accessed 20 May 2020).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "The Turkish Peace-II" in *Official: Cabinet: Various papers (5 February 1919-17 January 1920)*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/1), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F1> (accessed 20 May 2020).

²² Ibid.

the war could not come to an end with such a settlement.²³ Montagu was right about the wars, because the Kemalist movement had already started to get a foothold in Anatolia in 1920.

According to Montagu, "it would be disastrous to dictate a peace which the Allies had not the military strength to enforce" as Curzon had once declared.²⁴ Therefore, for the sake of the British interests in India and the Middle East, he kept on suggesting the reconsideration or the rejection of the conference proposals by the cabinet. Montagu's discomfort was stemming from the ascending influence of the Khilafat movement in early 1920. The branches of the movement were sending petitions to the Indian government and to London. They were also organizing conferences to impress public opinion. Besides, they were planning strikes and boycotts, and even cession of relationship with the British in case the Caliphate was disrupted.²⁵ It should also be remembered that the British were not on good terms with the Hindus either at that time. The renowned Non-Cooperation Movement of Gandhi would start in 1920, several months after the activities of the Khilafat intensified. Therefore, it was not a coincidence that Edwin Montagu pushed hard for the fair treatment of the Turks regarding the peace settlement as well as for keeping them in Istanbul.

The position of Montagu made Curzon furious. Lord Curzon had also been the Viceroy of India at the turn of the century. But these two statesmen had different views about protecting the British rule in Asia. Montagu thought that a kind of compromise should have been made with the Indians in order to defend the empire. However, for Curzon, the defence of the British rule in India was starting from the Near East and the Black Sea, controlling of which was strictly tied to the Straits.²⁶ Therefore, Curzon reacted Montagu's position by writing several counter-memoranda. According to him, the unanimity of the Indians towards the Caliphate was an artificial agitation.²⁷ When he was the governor of India, there was no such importance attached to Istanbul by the Indian Muslims given the fact that the city was not a religious but a political centre.²⁸ Therefore, according to the Foreign Secretary, the expulsion of the Turks from Istanbul would solve a 500 year old problem of Europe. While Curzon had a tendency to underestimate the possible impact of the Turkish peace settlement on Indian politics and society, Montagu tried to prove his point by sending all of the memoranda that had been written by the different organs of the Indian government.²⁹

In the end, the plans of Lloyd George and George Curzon were rejected by the British cabinet. Yet, it should also be emphasized that it was the War Office that primarily contributed to the ultimate decision,³⁰ rather than the ideas of Montagu. According to the War Office, a large number of troops would be necessary in order to control 'Turkey in Asia' as opposed to

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Meleady, pp.189-190.

²⁶ Sean Kelly, "How far West?: Lord Curzon's Transcaucasian (Mis)Adventure and the Defence of British India, 1918-23," *The International History Review* 35, no.2 (2012), p. 284

²⁷ "The Future of Constantinople" in *Official: Cabinet: Various papers (5 February 1919-17 January 1920)*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/1), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F1> (accessed 20 May 2020).

²⁸ He writes: "Khalif is khalif, wherever he resides." Ibid.

²⁹ "The Turkish Peace" in *Official: Cabinet: Various papers (5 February 1919-17 January 1920)*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/1), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F1> (accessed 20 May 2020).

³⁰ G. H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period, 1919-1924* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 80.

the sufficiency of naval existence in order to dominate 'Turkey in Istanbul.'³¹ Even if the outcome principally stemmed from the position of the War Office, it was in support of the ideas of Montagu. However, Istanbul constituted only one part of the problem with regard to the relationship between the British and Indians. Although the seat of the Caliphate had remained in Istanbul, the Treaty of Sevres would dismember the Ottoman Empire, not appeasing the Indian Muslims at all. Besides, the fate of the Ottoman Empire was not just tied to Istanbul anymore since the Kemalist movement gained strength step by step in Anatolia. Therefore, Montagu's focus would shift on the future of Anatolia after 1920, again based on the Indian dynamics.

The Indispensability of a Revision: The Future of Anatolia

The Treaty of Sevres, which was signed in August 1920, allowed the Caliphate to remain in Istanbul. But the terms about the Turkish sovereignty both in the capital and in other parts of the so-called Turkish Empire was nominal everywhere. Majority of the pre-war territories were separated from the Ottoman Empire, mostly being the mandates of Britain and France.³² While the west of Çatalca in Thrace was given to Greece, Izmir was also recognized under the control of the Greek authorities to whom the Ottoman Empire transferred its sovereignty.³³ However, as Fromkin writes, the major problem that Venizelos and Lloyd George faced about the treaty was their ability to implement its terms regarding the Asia Minor.³⁴

This was a genuine problem for them given the fact that the Kemalist movement in Anatolia had become a far more important parameter than the Sultan and his government in Istanbul. When the Entente powers were discussing the expulsion of the Turks from Istanbul in 1919, Mustafa Kemal Paşa had already moved to Anatolia where he organized a resistance movement, with a quest for sovereignty and independence. In April 1920, a new parliament had been commenced in Ankara, as the claimant of national sovereignty in Turkey and the executive body of the War of Independence. Therefore, although the Treaty of Sevres was signed by Istanbul government, Ankara never accepted these terms. In this respect, the period between 1920 and 1922 is actually the narrative that the Allied powers tried to impose the Treaty of Sevres with different means including the Greek army, yet had to discuss the possible revision of the treaty after each defeat in Western Anatolia by the Kemalist forces.

What was the position of the Secretary of State for India towards these developments? It was undoubtedly linked to the position of the Indians, who were furious about the terms of the Treaty of Sevres, although much debated problem of Istanbul had been resolved in favour of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the unity between the Hindus and Muslims, which Curzon had regarded as an artificial one, became apparent. While Gandhi sent letter to the Viceroy asking his resignation because of the Turkish settlement, Muslims participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement.³⁵ The Turkish peace had become one of the apparent driving forces of the national movement of India, emphasizing the abovementioned transnational dynamics. On the other hand, acceptance of the Treaty of Sevres by Istanbul, creating a

³¹ Ibid.

³² For the full text of the Treaty, see "Treaty of Peace Between the Allied & Associated Powers and Turkey" in *The Treaties of Peace, 1919-1924*, vol.2, (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924), also available at < http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Sevres_ENG.pdf > (accessed 30 May 2020).

³³ Article 69 suggests that Smyrna would remain under Turkish sovereignty, but Turkey "transfers to the Greek Government the exercise of her rights of sovereignty over the city of Smyrna and the said territory." *Ibid.*

³⁴ David Fromkin, *Barışa Son Veren Barış, Modern Ortadoğu Nasıl Yaratıldı?* (Istanbul: Epsilon, 2013), p. 358.

³⁵ Özcan, p.194.

disappointment in India, shifted the focus of the Indians from Istanbul to Ankara.³⁶ As the Indians lobbied for the Kemalists, Montagu started to support the idea of the revision of the peace settlement. Two issues, namely the future of Edirne and Izmir and the Anglo-French alliance, were paid a great deal of attention by the Secretary of State for India.

Mutatis Mutandis: The cases of Izmir and Edirne

The future settlement in Western Anatolia and Thrace had been one of the contentious, and also connected issues of the Turkish peace negotiations before the Treaty of Sevres. For instance, during the aforementioned Anglo-French Conference of 1919, the French representative Berthelot had offered a special regime for Izmir in favour of the Greeks, in return for the withdrawal of the Greek army from the region. However, Curzon had suggested that the withdrawal depended on the Greek sovereignty in the Eastern Thrace, directly associating these two issues with each other.³⁷ At the end, the Treaty of Sevres decided in favour of Greece in both cases, transferring the sovereign rights of the Ottoman Empire over Izmir to the Greek government, in addition to the direct Greek sovereignty over Edirne.

However, after a couple of months, the Allied powers started to discuss the future of these two cities one more time since the Greeks were defeated by the Kemalist army in January 1921, in the First Battle of İnönü (*I. İnönü Muharebesi*). One of the major diplomatic consequences of this Turkish victory was the invitation of Ankara government – somehow indirectly – to London in order to discuss a possible revision of the peace treaty.³⁸ In the end, the conference did not yield a positive outcome because the Turks were offered a slightly revised Sévres that was against the *raison d'être* of Ankara.

Despite its failure, this new round of diplomatic negotiations was rigorously followed by Montagu, once again creating tension and exposing the differences between the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for India. While the British Foreign Office did not offer any revision acceptable to the Turks in London, Montagu was trying to open Izmir and Edirne to discussion in early 1921. Montagu, in his memoranda, reminded the former statements of the Prime Minister about the future of the predominantly Turkish territories all over again.³⁹ According to Montagu, although the solution about the problematic cases such as Izmir and Edirne was dependent on the accurate statistics, no reliable data had been obtained since 1919.⁴⁰ Thus, Montagu emphasized the necessity to make plebiscites for these cities. Stressing that the Foreign Office had always acknowledged the existence of a statistical problem, he actually targeted Curzon who was keenly against the plebiscite option.

Montagu tried to form a reciprocity between the cases of Edirne and Izmir in order to obtain better terms for the Turks. According to him, Edirne was "a predominantly Turkish city of great veneration to the Turks and to Mohammedans generally, containing places which may

³⁶ Koloğlu, p. 999-1000.

³⁷ "Anglo-French Conference on the Turkish Settlement," in *Official: Cabinet: Various papers (5 February 1919-17 January 1920)*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/1), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F1> (accessed 20 May 2020).

³⁸ Celal Erikan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Tarihi*, compiled by Rıdvan Akın, (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), p. 184.

³⁹ "Memorandum by Edwin Montagu proposing a plebiscite among Greek and Turkish populations in the area of pre-war Turkey because the nationality and population statistics on which the provisions of the Treaty..." The Churchill Papers (CHAR 2/114/63-65), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+2%2F114%2F63-65> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

almost be described by Holy" and the "most ancient settlement of Turkey in Europe."⁴¹ He did not suggest the return of the city to the Turks frankly, but he recommended that the sovereignty of Edirne could be equated with that of Izmir. At the time, Izmir was also under discussion regarding a nominal sovereignty of the Turks, whose flag would be hoisted in the city but would be ruled with a Greek administration.⁴² Thus, if a similar model could be implemented on Edirne, with a nominal Greek sovereignty but with Turkish administration, the revised treaty could have a chance to satisfy the Turks.⁴³

Clearly Montagu regarded Edirne as a way to appease the Muslims of India, as he emphasized the Muslim character of the city. He was aware of the fact that the Greeks did not have an intention to change the status quo in Edirne vis-à-vis Izmir. Yet, to what extent he was aware that the Turks would not be satisfied by such an arrangement in the conditions of early 1921 seems like an important question mark. Nevertheless, he kept on emphasizing that the anti-Turkish policy of Britain was not serving the British interests in his correspondences.⁴⁴ This obstinately pro-Greek attitude of the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would also create a rift between the British and French eventually, leading to the Treaty of Ankara (1921). This treaty became a major blow to British foreign policy that Montagu would frequently refer to in his discussions.

"An Unfriendly Act:" The Treaty of Ankara and the Competition with the French

After the inconclusive London Conference, the Turkish position further strengthened owing to the victory in the Second Battle of İnönü (*II. İnönü Savaşı*). One of the most important results of this Turkish victory with regard to the Allied powers became the rift between Britain and France. In 1921, France had a different opinion than that of Britain about the power of the Greek army which had once been formulated as an instrument to implement the peace settlement.⁴⁵ However, the stubbornly pro-Greek position of the British Prime Minister was not the only divergence between these two powers. They had mutual distrust especially with regard to the Near East. During the summer months, France and Ankara discussed the terms of a possible treaty about which Winston Churchill said; "the most diplomatic application of the phrase could only be deemed an 'unfriendly act,'"⁴⁶ indicating the strained relationship between Paris and London.

It was after the Battle of Sakarya (*Sakarya Savaşı*) that the Treaty of Ankara was signed, ending the war between Ankara and France and leading to the withdrawal of the latter from Anatolia.⁴⁷ The Battle of Sakarya became a real blow to the policies of Lloyd George. In September, General Harington, who was the Commander of the Allied Occupation Forces in

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴"Letter from [Edwin Montagu] (Breccles Hall, Attleborough, Norfolk) to WSC urging him to act to prevent the damage which Montagu thinks will be done by David Lloyd George's anti-Turkey and pro-Greece policy...." The Churchill Papers (CHAR 2/114/11), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+2%2F114%2F11> (accessed 20 May 2020).

⁴⁵ Faruk Sönmezoğlu, *İki Savaş Sırası ve Arasında Türk Dış Politikası* (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 2011), p. 170.

⁴⁶ "French Negotiations with Ankara" in *Official: Colonial Office: Cabinet Papers*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 17/13A-B), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+17%2F13A-B> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁴⁷ Sönmezoğlu, p.176.

Istanbul wrote a letter to Churchill, the then Secretary of State for Colonies, emphasizing the necessity of a settlement and complaining about the worsening situation in Istanbul.⁴⁸ He frankly expressed the discomfort of the Indian troops therein.⁴⁹ Churchill, on the other hand, was emphasizing the necessity of a settlement specifically for the future of Mesopotamia in which he was keenly interested.⁵⁰ Even Curzon, while reacting both to Churchill and Montagu for their positions, started to acknowledge the need to revise the Treaty of Sevres in a way that would "reasonably" and "likely" satisfy Ankara.⁵¹ What could be acceptable to Ankara, however, was being discussed by the Foreign Office with the previous mentality, in other words, without an option of the Greek withdrawal for which the Kemalists were fighting.

Since the Secretary of State for India could not convince Curzon, who referred to Montagu's assumptions as "unfounded,"⁵² he started to seek help mostly from Churchill, or send the memoranda by the British officials in India to prove the difficulties that the British rule was facing therein, due to the nationalist surge and the related question of Turkish settlement.⁵³ In this respect, the Treaty of Ankara became another major issue through which Montagu tried to express the danger that British foreign policy posed to the empire in India. In a letter he sent to Churchill, he described the Treaty of Ankara, as a "diplomatic triumph at the cost of the English."⁵⁴ According to him, France had depicted Britain as a warmongering power to the whole world with this treaty.⁵⁵ This appearance of Britain undoubtedly obstructed the job of Montagu concerning India, in which he had major problems.

After the Treaty of Ankara, Montagu frequently emphasized the British position towards Turkey, vis-a-vis that of the French. For instance, during the negotiation process among the Allies in order to revise the Treaty of Sevres in December 1921, he warned the cabinet about France, which could offer more revision in favour of the Turks than the British would do in Thrace.⁵⁶ This would be a disaster for the British international interests in case such an offer was rejected by the Foreign Office,⁵⁷ proving the aforementioned point about Britain as a

⁴⁸ "General Harington on the Fighting Between Turkey and Greece" in *Official: Cabinet: Papers, Correspondence and Notes 5 August 1921-31 December 1921*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/7). Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Churchill Archive. <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F7> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary [Curzon] on British Intervention between Greece and Turkey" in *Official: Cabinet: Papers, Correspondence and Notes 5 August 1921-31 December 1921*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/7). Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Churchill Archive. <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F7> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ In order to see such memoranda, see the compilation dated 10 November 1921, in *Official: Cabinet: Papers, Correspondence and Notes 5 August 1921-31 December 1921*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/7). Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Churchill Archive. <http://localhost:8080/churchillarchive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F7> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁵⁴ "Letter from Edwin Montagu to Winston Churchill, dated 11 November 1921," in *Official: Cabinet: Papers, Correspondence and Notes 5 August 1921-31 December 1921*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/7). Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Churchill Archive. <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F7> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Turkish Peace, Memorandum of Secretary of State for India," in *Official: Cabinet: Papers, Correspondence and Notes 5 August 1921-31 December 1921*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/7). Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Churchill Archive. <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F7> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

warmongering state. Britain was alone among the Allies specifically after the Treaty of Ankara was signed, making the anti-Turkish decisions particularly British.

After the French crisis, Montagu frankly offered extensive revisions to the Turkish settlement, suggesting the restoration of all of the pre-war Turkish territories in Thrace to Turkey.⁵⁸ Likewise, he adopted a harsher tone in his criticisms towards the cabinet. According to him, giving the Greeks more territory than they were capable of ruling had never been a friendly idea, since it was obvious that this would bring chaos to Greece one way or another.⁵⁹ From the perspective of Indian politics, the British policy with regard to the Near East was not serving the interests of the British at all:

If only we could take the lead in genuinely rehabilitating Turkey, if only we could take the lead in winning the good will of the Turks instead of allowing ourselves to be dragged at the heels of France, in forcing Turkey to a reluctant peace, I believe you would be startled by the improvement in the Indian situation. Now the French crisis has delayed any near possibility of this taking place, and I have grave doubts whether with the present Prime Minister and the present Foreign Secretary anything could achieve it.⁶⁰

As Montagu assumed, Lloyd George and Curzon's policies did not bring an important revision to the Turkish settlement that could satisfy Ankara, which, as a result, started to prepare for an offensive that would bring an end to the war in the summer of 1922. In the meantime, the critical stance of Montagu brought an end to his term as the Secretary of State for India in March 1922. His forced resignation was about the publication of a statement without consulting the cabinet in order to deny the accusations of the Khilafat claiming another round of British military aid to the Greek army.⁶¹ As can be anticipated, it was just the last straw to the already broken relationship between Montagu, Lloyd George, and Curzon.

Conclusion

Throughout the period that this article dealt with, Montagu frequently tried to define himself as the supporter of the British interests.⁶² What connected the British interests to an impartial Turkish settlement for him was unquestionably related to the politics in India. In this respect, several aspects seem significant around the story of Edwin Montagu that this article tried to narrate. First, it was seen that Montagu preferred a "softer" peace settlement with the Turks, as a result of the transnational setting on which he acted. On the one hand, he had to deal with the Indian Muslims who had gathered around the Khilafat movement and who had been determined to support the Caliph - and later on - the Kemalists. On the other hand, he had to prevent a possible union between the Hindus and the Muslims, who were becoming more and more anti-colonial, interconnectedly with the other parts of the world, particularly the Near East. Second, this narrative indicated that the Turkish settlement in the post-war period and accordingly the Turkish War of Independence cannot be evaluated within the confines of Turkey. Rather, it transcends the Turkish boundaries; both affecting and being affected by the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Letter from Edwin Montagu (India Office) to WSC defending his policy in" The Churchill Papers (CHAR 2/120/54-56), Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge), Churchill Archive, <http://www.churchillarchive.com/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+2%2F120%2F54-56> (accessed 20 May 2020).

⁶¹ Bennett, p. 84.

⁶² He frequently reiterated: "I am not pro-Turkish." "Turkish Peace, Memorandum of Secretary of State for India," in *Official: Cabinet: Papers, Correspondence and Notes 5 August 1921-31 December 1921*. The Churchill Papers (CHAR 22/7). Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Churchill Archive. <http://localhost:8080/churchill-archive/explore/page?id=CHAR+22%2F7> (accessed 1 Jun 2020).

different parts of the world. This understanding, from a historiographical point of view, has a potential to yield fruitful accounts on the post-war Turkish history. Last but not least, the story of Edwin Montagu, as the main actor of this study, showed that the different institutions of the British state, including the War and Colonial Offices, had opposing ideas about the Turkish settlement. Montagu did not have the power to shape the ultimate decisions regarding Turkey. Instead, British foreign policy remained to be dominated by pro-Greek Lloyd George and George Curzon until its eventual collapse in 1922. Despite this fact, however, the position of Montagu is a good example of the existence of dissenting views, creating serious tension inside the British government.

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