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USSR-TURKEY RELATIONS (Second Half of the 1950s)

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СОВЕТСКО-ТУРЕЦКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ (вторая половина 1950-х гг.)

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Abstract. In the article, the tension of USSR-Turkey relations starting from the second half of the 20th century, the international environment and conflicts in the Middle and Middle East region in the 1950s, the projects put forward by the United States, England and France for the defense of the Middle East, the measures taken against the Soviet threat, and for the sake of influence in Syria. The aggravation of the struggle between the USA and the USSR, the impact of the Syrian crisis on the relations between the USSR and Turkey was investigated. At the same time, Turkey submitted a memorandum to its Western allies that reflected the main goal of the USSR's policy regarding the Middle East, despite the calls of the Soviet heads of state to normalize relations with Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s, the special services of the USSR ignored the Kurdish and Armenian factors in the Middle East. Attempts to use it and issues related to the Baghdad Pact were analyzed.

Аннотация. Рассматривается напряженность советско-турецких отношений начиная со второй половины XX века, международная обстановка и конфликты в ближневосточном регионе в 1950-е годы, проекты, выдвинутые США, Англией и Францией для обороны Ближнего Востока, меры, принимаемые против советской угрозы, и ради влияния в Сирии. Обострение борьбы между США и СССР, влияние сирийского кризиса на отношения между СССР и Турцией. В то же время Турция представила своим западным союзникам меморандум, отражавший основную цель политики СССР в отношении Ближнего Востока, несмотря на призывы глав советского государства к нормализации отношений с Турцией в 1950-1960-е годы. Проанализированы попытки использования курдского и армянского факторов и вопросы, связанные с Багдадским пактом.

Keywords: Turkey, USSR, cold war, Syrian crisis, USA, England, Baghdad Pact.

Ключевые слова: Турция, СССР, холодная война, сирийский кризис, США, Англия, Багдадский пакт.

In the second half of the 1950s, a series of crisis events in the Middle East brought the Soviet-Turkish relations to the limit of tension in a very short time.

In the 1950s, when the Cold War era, formed mainly within the framework of two opposing blocs and ideologies, began to feel its influence, the international environment, and especially the Near and Middle East region, became an area where major problems and significant conflicts were experienced. In this framework, in addition to the states of the region, the United States and Western states on one side, and Soviet Russia on the other side, began to show initiatives against the region. By sending military equipment and specialists to the region, the USSR tried to gain influence and spread the communist ideology, while the United States, France and England tried to take measures against these initiatives by establishing regional cooperation and defense organizations [11, p. 213-214].

The protection of the Near and Middle East region against the Soviet threat was of great importance for the United States and England. In this framework, projects for the defense of the Middle East were put forward by the United States, England and France. The first of these initiatives was the Middle East Command Project, which emerged in 1951 and involved the United States, England, and France, as well as Turkey. Since the main goal of the project was the protection of the Suez region, the realization of the project depended on the support of Egypt. In fact, such an initiative was perceived by Egypt as an attempt by colonialists and great powers to control the region. However, this proposal was not accepted by Egypt, which supports Arab nationalism and aims to lead the Arab states in this framework, and it was destroyed before it was created.

The United States and England, who did not give up their policy of controlling the region, proposed the Middle East Defense System project again in 1953, but it was not accepted by Egypt. Although this policy of the Western countries made Egypt and A. Nasir the leader of the Arab world, it further spoiled the relations between Turkey and the Arab countries.

After these events, US Secretary of State J. F. Dulles' visit to the countries of the region in 1953 initiated the US Northern Belt Initiative (Northern Belt Initiative) to protect the region. This initiative was an example of the abandonment of the establishment of defense organizations in the region. Instead, it was envisaged that the states on the southern borders of the USSR would create an alliance between themselves and create a barrier against the USSR. The Northern Belt Initiative was also important in creating the foundations of the 1955 Baghdad Pact.

As in other projects, Turkey assumed the main role in this project. The signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Turkey and Pakistan in 1954 was one of the first steps on this path.

On the other hand, in a region with a significant Arab majority, the importance of the participation of Arab states in defense organizations was clearly seen in two previous failed attempts. In this regard, Menderes tried to convince them of the Soviet threat within the framework of the roles that Turkey took to explain the necessity of the structure in the region, which is a structure of the Arab states.

In this regard, A. Menderes made efforts to create an alliance of Arab states against the Soviet threat. The first step to create an alliance in the region was taken in 1955 by visiting Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. However, only Iraq was positive to this alliance and an agreement was signed between the two countries in 1955. Later, England, Pakistan and Iran joined the agreement and expanded the alliance [9, p. 65-66].

Another factor affecting the relations between the USSR and Turkey during this period was the events in Syria. The main goal of the USSR's policy regarding the Syrian crisis was to prevent Western intervention in the Middle East. And in this way he played a decisive role in Middle East politics.

The USSR, which moved its representation in Beirut to Damascus in 1953, raised its representation in Syria to the level of an Embassy with the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1955. The conclusion of a defense alliance between Syria and Egypt in October 1955 helped it to sign an arms trade agreement with the USSR in September. These events brought Syria closer to the Eastern bloc.

Due to the Suez crisis, the struggle between the USA and the USSR for influence in Syria, which cut off diplomatic relations with England and France, intensified. Syria rejected the "Eisenhower doctrine" of the United States, preferring relations with the USSR in this matter, and signed an agreement on economic and technical cooperation with the Soviet Union in October 1957 [7, p. 185].

The USSR side evaluated the crisis as an interference in the affairs of the Western countries in Syria. Turkey's concern about the issue was that Syria would become a threat from the south with the

weapons received from the USSR. Turkey began to express this concern in September 1956. Turkey claimed that the Soviet Union was using Sputnik's technological advantage as a propaganda tool, thereby disrupting unity within the Western bloc and aiming to infiltrate the Middle East. Accordingly, Turkey presented a memorandum to its Western allies on November 14, 1956. According to the memorandum, the main goal of the policy of the USSR in the Middle East was as follows: 1) to cancel the Baghdad Pact, 2) to isolate Turkey by encircling it, 3) to increase the number of bases in the Middle East, 4) to remove the United States and England from the Middle East [16, p. 99].

The Memorandum also touched on the possibility of Turkey participating in an armed attack that will take place without declaring war in the region after such a strong arming of Syria. He claimed that these determinations were manifested in three other events: Soviet aircraft were flying over Turkish territory, Syria was rapidly becoming a military base for the USSR, and Iran, which was determined to defend itself to the end, but did not have the strength, felt threatened. With this memorandum, the USSR's friendly attitude towards Turkey was reversed with the news that appeared on Moscow radio and Pravda on November 27. The growing tension between the two countries made England think that the USSR might attack Turkey on November 29. The exchange of letters and notes between the two countries regarding the events in Syria made the situation even more tense. As a result of the pro-Soviet coup in Syria and Turkey's deployment of military forces on its border with Syria, the USSR did not welcome it.

Initially, on September 10, Bulganin sent a letter to Menderes [10, p. 257]. He began his letter by reminding that the USSR has recently tried to establish relations between the two countries on the basis of friendship, cooperation and mutual trust, and that this process is going step by step. Then, touching upon the changes that took place in the Near and Middle East in the period after the Second World War, he stated that the USSR supported a number of states that declared their independence, and that it also extended this support to Turkey at the time. The USSR expressed that it did not have any economic and political goals related to the region, on the contrary, it condemned the intervention of the Western countries in the region. After that, the USSR, expressing its concern about Turkey's military buildup on the border with Syria, made it clear that Turkey would be guilty of any conflict that would arise.

This letter was an important event as the first warning of the USSR to Turkey during the Syrian crisis. Following this letter, the USSR sent a note to Turkey on September 11. The note stated that Turkey was preparing to attack Syria. It was demanded that the intervention of the USSR in Syria should not be carried out on the grounds that, in addition to violating the Charter and principles of the UN, it would harm the security of the USSR.

Menderes answered Bulagi's note on September 30. The text of the answer mentioned the history of bilateral relations and said that the Soviet Union was guilty of the events that happened after the Second World War. Although Turkey said that it was positive towards the efforts of the USSR to improve relations, it emphasized that it was only a matter of words. Turkey was waiting for practical steps to be taken by the USSR to fulfill these words.

In the case of Syria, Turkey stated that Syria was armed at a higher level than necessary, and that it directed Syria against these concerns of the USSR, and that its country had no intention of interfering in Syria's internal affairs.

With this answer, Menderes sent at least three messages. First, the information about Turkey's attack on Syria was not true. Secondly, the influence of the USSR on Syria was emphasized. Thirdly, it stated that the note of the USSR was perceived as a threat, which would not have a good effect on the normalization of relations.

In an interview given by N. Khrushchev to the American newspaper on October 8, 1957, he openly threatened by claiming that Turkey and Syria were provoked by the United States and that

Russia was ready to use military force to protect its interests in the event of a war, and that Turkey would not be able to survive such a war even for a day. If war breaks out, we are with Turkey, but you Americans are far away. After the cannons start firing, rockets can also start flying. And then it will be too late to think about it, he said. According to Khrushchev, Turkey placed its military forces on the Syrian border and left the Turkish-Russian border ineffective [13, p. 5]. In Syria, in turn, on October 9, it opposed Turkey's deployment of military forces on the border by sending a note to Turkey [18, p. 2]. Turkey responded in his note, he rejected Syria's threats, stating that the forces were for the protection of his own security [3, p. 3].

Finally, in October, when Turkey's intervention in Syria on its own came up, the US tried to prevent it, thinking that the USSR's intervention in Turkey would be inevitable in such a case. US Secretary of State J.F. Dulles said on September 9 and October 11 that if the USSR attacks Turkey, his country will not be indifferent to it and that the Soviet Union will be responsible for the events that will take place. On October 10, 1957, Eisenhower announced his support for Turkey within the framework of his doctrine, and issued a joint statement with the British Prime Minister on October 25, saying that the Soviet threats directed against Turkey would be responded to in accordance with Article 5 of the NATO treaty if necessary [14, p. 162].

In October 1957, Syria put the issue on the agenda of the UN. Of course, the first support came from the Soviet Union. While Syria considered Turkey and the United States guilty of the events in the region, it rejected Saudi Arabia's proposals to mediate between the parties. Until the end of October, while the search for a solution to the crisis continued through the UN, the idea that Turkey would attack Syria was getting stronger in the USSR. Turkey was more interested in the parliamentary elections due to the restrictions imposed on the press. Indeed, the crisis ended immediately after the October 27 elections.

On October 29, 1957, Khrushchev, who participated in the event held in Moscow in connection with the thirty-fourth anniversary of the Republic, declared that there was no danger in the Middle East and that the whole issue was misunderstood, and announced that the USSR would not attack Turkey.

Finally, in November 1957, the crisis ended as a result of Syria withdrawing its words against Turkey, and in return, Turkey withdrew its military forces from the country's border.

USSR Prime Minister N. Bulganin advised A. Menderes to convene a Turkish-USSR conference for the normalization of bilateral relations. However, this proposal of the Soviet side was left unanswered by Turkey. The Turkish government responded to the messages sent by N. Bulganin on November 22, 1957, and January 17, 1958, on January 20, 1958. In its response letter, the Turkish government rejected the accusations in the Syrian events and stated that efforts to normalize relations between the two countries would be useless [12, p. 437].

In September 1957, based on the plans of the State Security Committee of the USSR, when Syria-Turkey relations became tense regarding the Kurdish problem and territorial issues, Moscow sent a note to Ankara and began to gather army units in the Caucasus region, and Marshal K. Rokossovsky was appointed commander of this area. However, in October 1957, the Soviet leadership declared that there would be no war with Turkey. Similar events were repeated in 1958 during the coup d'état in Iraq. Despite the calls of the Soviet heads of state to normalize relations with Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s, the attempts of the special services of the USSR to use the Kurdish and Armenian factors against Turkey in the Middle East did not leave the diary.

Chairman of the USSR State Security Committee A. Shelepin's plan to activate the Kurds in Turkey and the idea of expanding relations with foreign Armenian organizations served to strengthen subversive activities in Turkey and weaken Ankara. In August 1957, the Soviet leadership allowed Parunak Tovmasyan, the leader of the Ramkavar Azatakan party, to secretly come to the USSR. In

Yerevan, P. Tovmasyan met almost all the leaders of the Armenian SSR, including the First Secretary of the Republican Communist Party, Suren Tovmasyan, and in Moscow, D. Solod, who replaced the head of the Middle East Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. In order to expand relations with Armenians abroad and use them in the implementation of various goals of the USSR, the leadership of the Communist Party of Armenia proposed sending more employees of Armenian nationality to the embassies of the USSR in their letters to Moscow. P. Tovmasyan, in his negotiations in Moscow, raised the issue of transferring the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province of the Azerbaijan SSR to Armenia as a substitute for secret cooperation with the USSR [6, p. 507].

In addition, Soviet Russia's proposals for political and economic cooperation with Turkey continued during 1956-1957. On March 16, 1956, on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the 1921 treaty, an article was published in Pravda and Izvestia newspapers about the history of Turkey-USSR friendship and the benefits of restoring this friendship in both countries and in ensuring peace in the Middle East. For the first time in this article, it was emphasized that NATO on the part of the USSR was not an obstacle in the establishment of Turkey-Soviet Union relations [20, p. 401].

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On July 13, 1957, on the Moscow radio, the economic and trade relations between the USSR and Turkey were mentioned, and they stated that they could allocate a long-term loan for the oil and other products to be exported by Turkey [12, p. 437]. The Turkish side was not interested in this proposal, even referring to Egypt and Syria, Prime Minister A. Menderes said in his interview to the American radio that "it is difficult to accept that the countries that receive weapons from Russia serve peace". Also, he once again showed his mistrust towards the USSR by saying that we are facing the division of the Middle East between these countries.

Another reason for the tension between Turkey and the USSR was the military coup in Iraq. The coup, which US President Eisenhower described as "the biggest crisis since the Korean War" and shocked the region as well as the whole world, was carried out on July 14, 1958, under the leadership of General Abdulkarim Qasim [2]. The news that Turkey will take part in the new administration of Iraq, which is a member of the Baghdad Pact, caused a renewed tension in Turkey-USSR relations.

There were two reasons for Turkey's intervention in the events. First, Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact would destroy the alliance that Turkey had worked so hard for, and Iraq would be able to return to the Arab states. Second, the Kurds who rebelled against the Coup Government in Iraq were likely to create some kind of autonomous state. This was an unacceptable event for Turkey and Iran. For these reasons, Turkey on the one hand gathered troops on the border and on the other hand started diplomatic initiatives. In these attempts, the intervention in which the opponents in Iraq will participate, the presence of Turkmens in Iraq and the issue of Mosul were brought up again [8, p. 131].

In the face of these events, the USSR first made a verbal statement to Turkey on July 16 and expressed the hope that Turkey would make efforts to maintain peace in the Middle East. On the same day, during the reception of the Yugoslav ambassador, Khrushchev announced that if Turkey tries to change the current situation, it will respond with military means. Then on July 19, Khrushchev announced the holding of a five-way summit on the Middle East issue with the participation of Great Britain, France, the United States, India and the USSR. presented his proposal. Turkey first opposed

the summit proposal at the NATO meeting, and then on July 22 sent a reply letter denying the claims of the USSR.

Turkey's response was also influenced by its Western allies. The USA and England thought that the USSR would respond in case of Turkey's intervention, and they tried to dissuade Turkey from such an intervention, considering that they might also get involved in this case. On July 25, 1958, the USSR side again warned Turkey not to intervene in the events in Iraq [17, p. 5]. The government of A. Menderes denied these claims.

After some time, the European countries, especially America, recognized the new regime in Iraq, and on July 31, 1958, they were forced to recognize the military regime in Baghdad. After the military coup in Iraq, this country announced its departure from the Baghdad Pact on March 24, 1959. In this way, the unity of the Arab states was completely broken.

Turkish-Soviet relations began to develop positively after the Balkan and Baghdad pacts were rendered ineffective by the efforts of Soviet Russia. At the same time, during Khrushchev's speech on March 28, 1958, his condemnation of Stalinist policies was one of the factors influencing the events.

After 1960, the Turkish side began to take a positive approach to Russia's attempts to improve relations. Turkey's inability to obtain the necessary economic assistance from the West after 1955 influenced this policy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs F. R. Zorlu, who expressed the normalization of relations between the two countries in his speech at the Parliament on January 9, 1960, said that they welcomed the withdrawal of Soviet Russia's land claims with great joy [4, p. 1]. Then on April 11, 1960 In the joint statement issued by the heads of the two countries, it was announced that a high-level meeting would be held between Turkey and Soviet Russia, mutual visits of Prime Ministers would be organized, and the first visit would be carried out by Prime Minister A. Menderes in July 1960.[5, p.2] However, this meeting did not take place due to the military coup that took place in Turkey on May 27, 1960 [1, p. 262].

On May 28, 1960, N. Khrushchev sent a letter to J. Gursel, expressing his hope that Turkey would stick to the policy of neutrality. However, the Turkish side stated in its response letter that it did not accept this positively. In short, the military leaders, like their predecessors, continued to see the Soviet Union as a threat and continued Turkey's relations with the United States and other Western countries unchanged.

Also, in October 1960, at the request of Khrushchev, a meeting was held with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Salim Sarper. In this meeting, the USSR side expressed their willingness to develop bilateral relations and even suggested that they could mutually withdraw their military forces from the Caucasus if necessary [15, p. 769].

About two months after the coup, in August 1960, Jupiter missiles were placed in Turkey, and new radio stations began to be created in Turkey, especially in the Eastern Anatolia region, against the Soviet propaganda radios [19, p. 265].

Despite all this, the signing of the protocol on increasing trade between the USSR and Turkey in March 1963 signaled the normal course of relations.

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