

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE ARMENIAN QUESTION FROM THE ARMISTICE OF MUDROS TO THE OPENING OF THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The defeat of Turkey in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 brought the Armenian Question to the forefront and made up part of international relations. The Peace Treaty of San Stefano (near the Ottoman capital of Constantinople), signed on March 3, 1878 between Russia and Turkey, obliged the latter, under Article 16, to carry out necessary reforms in the six Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, in order to guarantee the security of life and property of the Armenians living in this area. The evacuation of Russian troops would only take place after these obligations were met by the sultan's government. Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano read:

“As the evacuation by the Russian troops of the territory which they occupied in Armenia, and which is to be restored to Turkey, might give rise to conflicts and complications detrimental to the maintenance of good relations between the two countries, the Sublime Porte engages to carry into effect, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by the local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians”¹.

However, the rivalry between the Great Powers of Europe led to revision of the Treaty of San Stefano. Great Britain and Austro-Hungary in particular were opposed to the growing might of Russia. They called for a new conference which was summoned that same year in Berlin and was headed by the six Great Powers of Europe. The conference was brokered by the renowned German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who promised to be an “honest mediator,” between the Great Powers and Turkey. However, in reality Bismarck was more supportive of the British, and especially Austro-Hungary. Russia was forced to abandon some of the gains that were recognized with the Treaty of San Stefano. Bulgaria would become independent of Ottoman rule, however, Macedonia would be left outside of its borders, and so would Adrianople, which was not far away from Constantinople, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, formerly part of the Ottoman domain, would be annexed by Austria-Hungary.

The Alashkert Valley and the strategic fortress of Bayazet (Daroynk), which according to the Treaty of San Stefano would be part of the Russian Empire, in the revised Treaty of Berlin were returned to Turkey. At the conference of Berlin, the Armenian representatives requested that the six Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire should be granted autonomy under European supervision, under the sovereignty of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The request was not fully met, however, under

¹ Great Britain Foreign Affairs, Parliament Sessional Papers, 1878, Vol. 83, Turkey No. 22, London, p. 14.

Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin, signed on July 13, 1878, provided that Turkey was to institute reforms and guarantee the security in the Armenian provinces, and had to periodically inform the other five European signatories of the treaty about the progress of these reforms. The revised Article 16 of the original Treaty of San Stefano became article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin:

The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out without further delay, the ameliorations and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers who will superintend their application².

The Sublime Porte (Sultan Abdul Hamid II's government) masterfully played on the rivalry between the European powers, and made "a defensive alliance" with Great Britain, which pledged to defend the Ottoman Empire against Russian expansion.

Article I of the Convention of the said alliance between Great Britain and Turkey, was signed on June 4, 1878, stating:

"If Batoum, Ardahan, Kars or any of them shall be retained by Russian, and if any attempt shall be made at any future time by Russia to take possession of any further territories of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan in Asia, as fixed by the Definitive Treaty of Peace, England engages to join His Imperial Majesty the Sultan in defending them by force of arms.

In return, His Imperial Majesty the Sultan promises to England to introduce necessary reforms, to be agreed upon later between the two Powers, into the Government, and for the protection, of the Christian and other subjects of the Porte in these territories; and in order to enable England to make necessary provisions for executing her engagement, His Imperial Majesty the Sultan further consents to assign the Island of Cypress to be occupied and administered by England".³

Thus, Great Britain opposed Russian expansion and the latter's takeover of Armenian territories that were within the Ottoman Empire and pledged to support the sultan. Great Britain, like Russia, also declared itself to be "the protector of the Christian subjects," and for its support against Russia, received from the sultan the Island of Cyprus, essentially in exchange for certain territories that already were conquered by Russia, including a large portion of Western Armenia.

Russia could only keep from the territories of "Turkish Armenia" predominantly the districts of Ardahan and Kars. While the Berlin Conference was going on, the Kurds took advantage of the Russian withdrawal and renewed their attacks upon Armenian civilians throughout the Armenian provinces. The prevalent lawlessness and continued massacres of Armenians at the hands of the Kurds and Circassians resulted in thousands of Armenians being forced to flee to Eastern Armenia and elsewhere to Russia. The pledges made at the congresses of San Stefano and Berlin to safeguard

² Ibid., No. 38, London, p. 30.

³ Ibid., Vol. 82, Turkey, No. 2, p. 3.

the Armenians from the attacks of neighboring Kurds and Circassians were not only in vain, but in fact after 1878 became much worse. The Turkish policy of resettling a large number of formerly nomadic or semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes in the territories of Western Armenia, which prior to this were overwhelmingly Armenian-populated, was intensified.

In addition, Circassians, who in the 1860s were fleeing Russian encroachment into their lands in the Northern Caucasus, were also being resettled upon, among other places, Armenian lands of the Ottoman Empire, and like the Kurds, were attacking and pillaging defenseless Armenian villages. After repeated pleas by Armenians to the Sublime Porte, the Grand Vizier simply stated that if Armenians were not happy with their situation they could leave their land, which in turn would be resettled by the Muslim Circassians⁴.

The Armenians found out that the promises of reforms made at the Congress of Berlin and the Cyprus Convention were only mere declarations without any serious mechanisms for implementation. Archbishop Mkrtych Khrimyan, an outstanding Armenian spiritual leader, educator and national liberation figure, on behest of the Armenian Patriarch Nerses Varjabedian of Constantinople, led an Armenian national delegation to the Conference of Berlin. Here Khrimyan presented Armenian hopes for reforms in the Armenian provinces. The European leaders pledged to do their utmost to solve the Armenian Question, as it now became part of international politics. However, Khrimyan already understood after the conference that the European leaders were not genuinely committed to seeing the persecution and suffering of the Armenian people come to an end.⁵ All of the European Great Powers (including Russia) had proclaimed that they were the protectors of Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, including the Armenians, but for these powers this was simply a useful way of exerting pressure upon the sultan for political expediency. Archbishop Khrimyan was sent to the Congress of Berlin by Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Nerses II Varjabedian (1874-1884). Patriarch Nerses II played a key role in raising the Armenian question and the need for improving the situation of the Armenian people in both the San Stefano and Berlin conferences, which formed the basis of articles 16 and 61 respectively.

Simultaneously, the Ottoman defeats in the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 at the hands of various much smaller Balkan Christian states brought the plans to improve the conditions of the Ottoman Armenians to the forefront. Once again the old 1878 package and the pledge for reforms in the Armenian provinces, which were signed by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1895, but were never implemented, came to the forefront of discussion. The French, British and Italians were anxious to limit the growing German influence in the Ottoman Empire, while the Russian government encouraged the

⁴ Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1963, p. 79.

⁵ For a detailed study on the Armenian reforms and the national liberation movement of the 19th century see the above quoted work of Louise Nalbandian; *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1963.

Catholicos of Armenia to appeal through the viceroy of the Caucasus to the Ottoman government for intervention in favor of reforms in the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Earlier in 1907 the British had signed the Anglo-Russian agreement which greatly decreased the rivalry among these two competing empires, which among other things also paved the way for the closer cooperation of these two powers on the Armenian Question. The Armenian reform package was prepared by André Mandelstam⁶, the dragoman⁷ at the Russian Embassy in Constantinople, and representatives from the Armenian National Assembly. It was introduced and discussed in Constantinople at a meeting of the ambassadors of France, Britain and Italy. The project suggested the formation of a single province from six Armenian provinces (Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Kharput and Sivas) under either an Ottoman Christian or a European governor general. The governor general was to be appointed by the Powers for the ensuing five years. Germany, already closely aligned with Turkey, opposed the project and succeeded in obtaining significant modifications, including splitting the region into two provinces.

The reform package was signed on February 8, 1914, between the Ottoman Empire, represented by Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha, and Russia. Louis Constant Westenenk, an administrator for the Dutch East Indies, and Nicolai Hoff, a major in the Norwegian Army, were selected as the first two inspectors. However, the Balkan Wars had created much deeper Turkish government resentment not only towards the Balkan states, but more broadly towards Russia, that supported the Balkan states during these wars against Turkey, the Armenian Christian minority, which was now viewed by the Young Turk leaders as another possible instrument for “interfering” into “their domestic affairs.” Hoff was in Van when the news of Turkish attack on Russia had broken out and marked Turkey’s entry into World War I, just as Westenenk was preparing to depart for his post in Erzurum (Karin). Several weeks after the outbreak of the war, the Turkish government officially abolished the reform package on December 16, 1914. Turkey entered World War I on the side of Germany and other Central Powers (Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria) on October 29, 1914, by attacking Russian Black Sea ports. In

⁶ André Mandelstam (1869–1949) became a pioneer of the human rights movement in the interwar period. Originally a diplomat in the service of the Russian Empire, he went into exile to Paris after the Bolshevik revolution and became an important member of the international human rights movement. Mandelstam drafted the first ever international human rights declaration which was adopted by the Institute of International Law at its New York session in 1929. Mandelstam’s work on human rights protection was influenced by his experiences as a diplomat in Constantinople where, in the years preceding World War I, he had witnessed the growing persecution of the Armenians which ultimately culminated with a horrific genocide. After the Armenian Genocide, which had left a permanent and deep mark, Mandelstam remained committed to the Armenian cause for the rest of his life. For more on the work and legacy of André Mandelstam see Helmut Philipp Aust, *From Diplomat to Academic Activist: André Mandelstam and the History of Human Rights*, *The European Journal of International Law* Vol. 25 no. 4.

⁷ A dragoman was an interpreter, translator, and official guide between Turkish, Arabic, and Persian-speaking countries and polities of the Middle East and European embassies, consulates, vice-consulates and trading posts. A dragoman was required to have knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and European languages.

turn Britain and France (allies of Russia fighting Germany) declared war on the Ottoman Empire on November 3, 1914. In fact, two days earlier, British navy upon the orders of First Sea Lord Winston Churchill had attacked Ottoman shipping off of the port of Smyrna. Russia officially declared war on the Ottoman Empire on November 2, 1914.

In March of 1918, as the war was coming to its end, the British Foreign Office prepared a memorandum which listed nation by the nation a synopsis of moral and political obligations to the many nations that were affected by the war. A separate part dealt with the Armenian Question, noting that:

“We are not bound by any valid contractual obligations, although we are morally committed to the Armenians not only by article 61 of the Berlin Treaty of 1878, but also by the many public statements made on their behalf”⁸.

TURKISH DEFEAT AND THE END OF WORLD WAR I: THE ARMISTICE OF MUDROS

In September of 1918, Grand Vizier Tala’at Pasha visited his Central Powers allies in Berlin, Germany, and Sofia, Bulgaria. He came away with the understanding that the war was no longer winnable. With Germany likely seeking a separate peace, the Ottomans would be forced to do so as well. Tala’at convinced Enver and Djemal that they must resign, as the Allies would impose far harsher terms if they thought the people who started the war and were clearly implicated in “crimes against humanity” as the Allied May 24, 1915 declaration noted, were still in power.

Faced with defeat, the Sultan dismissed Enver from his post as War Minister on October 4, 1918.

On October 13, Tala'at and the rest of his ministry resigned. Ahmed Izzet Pasha replaced Tala'at as Grand Vizier. Two days after taking office, he sent the captured British General Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend to the Allies to seek terms for an armistice.

On October 25, 1918, Boghos Nubar asked the U.S. Ambassador in France, William Sharp, to transmit to the State Department that Armenia should be recognized by the Allied governments as a belligerent. The request was based on the fact that thousands of Armenians fought for the Allied armies on various fronts. The Turkish government used the excuse of Armenian volunteers fighting in the Allied armies, to carry out an unprecedented mass extermination of hundreds of thousands of Armenians, including women, children and the elderly. This shocking development was gravely condemned by the Allies during the war with a joint declaration in May of 1915. The Allies had avowed to hold the Turkish government responsible for these crimes against humanity⁹.

⁸ British War Cabinet (hereafter cited as CAB) Memoranda 1916-1919, CAB 24/5 Synopsis of our Obligations to our Allies and Others, March 14, 1918.

⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter cited as FRUS), 1918, Supplement 1, The World War, I, p. 894.

In early October of 1918, as the Ottomans were beginning to completely lose the war to the Allies, the Turkish governor of Smyrna, Rahmi Bey, contacted the Allies and stated that it was possible for him to overthrow the Young Turk government, provided he would receive favorable terms from the Allies who already seemed to be the victorious side. Rahmi offered his terms to the Allies which among other things included the retention of Constantinople as the capital of Turkey. The strategic straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, connecting the Black with the Mediterranean seas, to remain under Turkish control with the right to build fortifications, but with complete freedom of passage to ships of all nations along with granting the right of free governments for Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, however, with retention of nominal Turkish sovereignty¹⁰.

Prime Minister Lloyd George in a telegram to the American Diplomatic Liaison Officer of the Supreme War Council, Arthur Hugh Frazier, said that the discussion of the terms offered by Rahmi Bey were ongoing. He had stated that the Allies should notify the Turkish side that the non-Turkish parts of the Ottoman Empire like Arabia, Armenia and others would be detached¹¹. Eventually, Lloyd George replied that the Allies can only negotiate terms with the heads of the Turkish government¹². Thus, Rahmi's terms and his attempt at negotiating peace for Turkey came to naught. Rahmi was considered to be a righteous man. He was not only a politician, but a gifted musician and composer. He was considered to be a Western-minded "enlightened Turk," who was fond of different cultures and had many friends of different nationalities who lived in the Ottoman Empire. During the Armenian Genocide, when the Young Turk leaders ordered the roundup of Armenians throughout Smyrna, Rahmi Bey refused to carry out those orders.

By mid-October Tala'at Pasha was looking for a way to conclude an armistice with the Allies. The Turkish Chargé d'affaires in Spain contacted the Spanish Foreign Ministry and requested that the latter inform the U.S. Secretary of State and President Wilson to "take upon himself the task of reestablishment of peace," and to "notify all belligerent states of this demand and to invite them to delegate plenipotentiaries to initiate negotiations"¹³. Tala'at wanted to surrender to the United States to see if he could gain the benefits of President Wilson's Fourteen Points based on the principles of self-determination, despite the Ottoman Empire and the United States not being at war; however, the American side never responded, as it was waiting on British advice which never came.

On October 30, 1918, the Ottoman Empire signed an armistice in the town of Mudros of the Greek island of Lemnos, thus effectively ending the hostilities with the Allies. The armistice was signed by the Ottoman Minister of Marine Affairs Rauf Bey

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 342.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 344.

¹² Ibid., p. 353.

¹³ Ibid., p. 360.

and the British Admiral Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe, on board *HMS Agamemnon* in the harbor of Mudros. As part of several conditions to the armistice, the Ottomans surrendered their remaining garrisons outside of Asia Minor, as well as granted the Allies the right to occupy forts controlling the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. The Allies reserved the right to occupy any Ottoman territory in the event of a threat to their security and disorder. The Ottoman army including its air force was demobilized, and all ports, railways, and other strategic points were made available for use by the Allies. In the Caucasus, the Ottomans had to retreat to within the pre-1914 borders. The defeated Ottomans also agreed to sign a permanent peace treaty with the Allies. Two days later, all “three Pashas” fled from Constantinople. On January 1, 1919, the new Turkish government officially expelled Enver Pasha from the army. He was tried in absentia in the Turkish Courts-Martial of 1919-20 for war crimes, including for mass extermination of Armenians, and condemned to death in absentia. Enver went to Germany, where he closely worked with German Communist figures like Karl Radek. In April of 1919, Enver left for Moscow in order to serve as a secret envoy for his friend General Hans von Seeckt who wished for a German-Soviet alliance. Besides working for General von Seeckt, Enver envisioned cooperation between the new Soviet government against the British, and went to Moscow. There he was well-received by Lenin, and established contacts with representatives from Central Asia and other exiled CUP members as the director of the Soviet Government’s Asiatic Department.

A number of articles of the Armistice of Mudros dealt specifically or impacted Armenia and Armenians.

Article Four of the Armistice of Mudros demanded that all Allied prisoners of war and Armenian interned persons and prisoners to be collected in Constantinople and handed over unconditionally to the Allies. Article Five demanded immediate demobilization of the Turkish army except for such troops as are required for surveillance of frontiers and for the maintenance of internal order. Article Eleven demanded immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from northwest Persia and Transcaucasia to behind the pre-war frontier. Article Sixteen stated that Turkish troops should immediately surrender in the Armenian region of Cilicia which was going to be occupied by Allied troops. While article Twenty-Four of the Armistice of Mudros reserved to the Allies the right to occupy the six Armenian provinces in case of disorder and stipulated that the Allies would also occupy the four Cilician towns of Sis, Hadjin, Zeitun, and Aintab. Cilicia was regarded as an Armenian area, and was included as point b. under Article Twenty-Four on the question of the Armenian provinces, as part of national aspirations for either autonomy or independence. After final approval the terms were telegraphed to General Allenby in Palestine, for he was expected to receive the initial Turkish overtures¹⁴.

¹⁴ Briton Cooper Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain’s Frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923*, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, 1976, p. 14; Gwynne Dyer, *The Turkish Armistice of 1918: A Lost Opportunity: The Armistice Negotiations of Mudros*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1972.

On the same day the Armistice of Mudros came into force (at noon of October 31), the British War Cabinet stated that the terms of the armistice are “sufficiently drastic to enable us to dictate the terms of a rightful and enduring peace in the Near and Middle East.” In particular, the War Cabinet underlined that:

"History will yet have to determine the part played by the Committee of Union and Progress, with its secret ramifications in every capital of Europe, in luring on Germany to war and in compassing the destruction of the Ottoman Empire—so long the cause of wars, diplomatic entanglements, massacres, and the misrule of many of the fairest provinces of the ancient world. Carasso, Tala'at, and Enver have done their evil work, and the reckoning has now to be paid. Armenia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Syria, and Palestine now enter upon a new chapter of their history...The war in the East is won, and the days when Constantinople could dictate terms to Europe are over, let us hope for ever"¹⁵.

On the eve of the Armistice of Mudros, Special Representative of President Woodrow Wilson, Edward M. House and Secretary of *The Inquiry*, which was later part of the Commission to Negotiate Peace at the Paris Peace Conference, submitted to the Secretary of State, Lansing, a detailed memorandum, explaining President Wilson's Fourteen Points and his vision for a post-World War world peace. The Fourteen Points in the speech were based on the detailed research of *The Inquiry*.

After the Armistice, both Germany and Turkey referred to President Wilson's Fourteen Points and generally accepted them as the basis for the terms of not only their surrender, but also negotiated them during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and thereafter.

As E. House, being the Special Representative of President Wilson, stated, among these were the Armenian people. Armenia was to be free and would extend from “sea to sea.” That is to say, from the Black to the Mediterranean Sea, incorporating the Black Sea province of Trebizond along with the six Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire as well as Cilicia, extending to the Mediterranean Sea. It was also suggested that one of the Great Powers should become a mandatory of Armenia to make sure that in its early stages the country is assured of the “unmolested opportunity of autonomous development,” since even a defeated Turkey was still viewed as a threat to its continued existence by both the Allies and the Armenians¹⁶.

When World War I was still ongoing President Wilson pledged to stand by Armenia at the future peace conference. On July 4, 1918, he promised to Miran Sevasly, Chairman of the Armenian National Union of America:

"I did express my own resolution to do all that I could to see that the hopes of the Armenians were satisfied and that no question of essential justice involved in the

¹⁵ CAB 24/145 Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report, Turkey, October 31, 1918, f. 136.

¹⁶ Ibid.

present European situation should be left unsettled in the general reckoning after the war"¹⁷.

During the Council of Four meeting at the Paris Peace Conference, represented by the heads of the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy, President Wilson pointed out that the so-called Sykes-Picot agreement made in 1916 between Great Britain, France and agreed by Russia, to partition Turkey, was void, since one of the parties (Russia) withdrew from the war and made a separate agreement with the Central Powers in 1918. President Wilson stressed the importance of including Cilicia within Armenia, since that gave the country an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea¹⁸.

The last point was arguably the most important in terms of international law and post-world war order since it called for the establishment of the League of Nations, "under specific covenants" for the purpose of "affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike"¹⁹.

Point Four of the Mudros Armistice stated that all Allied prisoners of war and Armenian interned [persons] and prisoners were to be collected at Constantinople and handed over unconditionally to the Allies. Armenian territory within the Caucasus was ordered to be evacuated by Turkish troops. Railways in the Caucasus were to be controlled by the Allies, which also indicated the occupation of Batum and Baku. Turkish troops were also ordered to withdraw from Cilicia. The Allies also reserved the right to occupy the six Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire²⁰.

Upon the surrender of Turkey and the Armistice of Mudros, the Special Envoy of the Armenian Catholicos Gevorg V, Armen Garo (Pasdermadjyan) and the Representative of the Armenian National Delegation, Mihran Sevasly, sent a telegram to the Secretary of State Robert Lansing notifying him that the surrender of Turkey to the Allies is of vital interest to Armenians, urging the U.S. government to add its weight to other Allied governments, in order that "the right of the Armenians be effectively safeguarded," through the following measures:

1. The withdrawal of all Turkish troops not only from the Transcaucasian Armenian provinces, but also from the six Armenian vilayets of Turkey and from Cilicia;
2. The occupation of all strategic points by the Allied troops in the above mentioned territory;
3. The adoption of measures of a nature to prevent the Turkish Government from organizing an influx of Turkish and Mohammedan immigrants into the Armenian territory;
4. The immediate organization of an inter-Allied commission of relief having for its purpose to help the Armenian refugees scattered throughout Turkey and elsewhere,

¹⁷ Wilson to Tumulty, July 19, 1918, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 49, Princeton, NJ, 1985, p. 20.

¹⁸ Gayane Makhmourian (Ed.), Armenia in the Documents of the U.S. Department of State: 1917-1920, Yerevan, 2011, p. 77.

¹⁹ FRUS, 1918, Supplement 1, The World War, I, p. 413.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 442.

and the adoption of effective measures to secure the repatriation of all such refugees and deported Armenians to within the boundaries of the future Armenian state;

5. Pending the deliberation of the peace congress and until the final settlement of the Armenian question, all Armenian territory to be administered by a provisional inter-Allied government²¹.

On November 7, 1918, the British War Cabinet reported that:

*“A good deal of uneasiness has been felt in Armenian circles over the terms of the armistice with Turkey, whereby Turkey is left in possession of the six Armenian vilayets during the armistice period subject to good behaviour. Recent answers to questions put in the House of Commons on this subject have tended to reassure their fears, as it is now made clear that the armistice terms bear no relation to the territorial settlement which will be imposed by the allies on Turkey at the peace conference”*²².

On November 17, 1918, British Lieutenant General William Montgomery Thomson, with about 2,000 soldiers of the British Indian Army and a detachment of Russian White Guard troops who were opposed to the Bolshevik government, arrived in Baku. General Thomson's arrival effectively marked his governorship of that city which lasted until the middle of 1919. Lloyd George stated that there were some 170,000 British troops in Russian Armenia, Caucasus and Syria. Ultimately, the British Prime Minister stated that they were not going to maintain their troops in Armenia, but only maintained them for the sake of law and order and to prevent further massacres²³.

On November 20, 1918, Secretary of State Robert Lansing sent a telegram to the U.S. Chargé d'affaires in Great Britain, Irwin B. Laughlin, telling him to inform the British Foreign Office that the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (Near East Relief)²⁴, with the support and approval of the U.S. government, desired to undertake at

²¹ Ibid., p. 895.

²² CAB 24/145 Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report, November 7, 1918, f. 140.

²³ Makhmourian G., Armenia in the Documents of the U.S. Department of State: 1917-1920, p. 51.

²⁴ Near East Relief was organized in 1915 in response to the Armenian Genocide after U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Henry Morgenthau, Sr. urged its formation in order to save the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) spearheaded the effort. Under the leadership of James L. Barton (Secretary of ABCFM) and philanthropist Cleveland H. Dodge, the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief was founded in 1915. The Committee was supported by President Woodrow Wilson. Through public rallies, church collections, and with the assistance of charitable organizations and foundations, the Committee raised millions in its campaigns to save “the starving Armenians.” The Committee was able to deliver funds through the American Embassy in Constantinople which relied upon the missionaries and its consuls to distribute the aid. While the U.S. entry into war against Germany and Turkey in April 1917 disrupted this critical lifeline, the Committee widened its scope of activities at the end of the war also to include Russian Armenia where hundreds of thousands had taken refuge. Renamed the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in 1918, it was incorporated by an act of Congress in 1919 as Near East Relief (NER). Between 1915 and 1930, when it ended operations, NER administered \$117,000,000 of assistance. It delivered food, clothing, and materials for shelter by the shipload from America. It set up refugee camps, clinics, hospitals, orphanages, and centers for vocational training. NER is credited with having cared for 132,000 Armenian orphans scattered across the region from Tbilisi and Yerevan to Constantinople, Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem.

once relief measures for rehabilitation of the oppressed nationalities of Turkish Empire in Constantinople and Asia Minor. It proposed to dispatch a ship with a cargo of foodstuffs, clothing, agricultural machinery, seed, and medical supplies, together with some 300 doctors, relief workers, mechanics and agriculturalists. The ship would sail from an American port on the Atlantic through the Dardanelles to a port on the coast of Armenia, and there would discharge its supplies and personnel²⁵. This was one of the first serious and mass relief efforts after the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire.

On November 21, 1918, the British Foreign Office prepared an important memorandum that proposed the possible partition of the Ottoman Empire. The borders of the proposed Armenian state included all of Western Armenia and Cilicia, as well as the territories of Eastern or Russian Armenia. The newly revived Armenian state would cover the territories stretching from the northwest the territory of the Black Sea, including the port of Trebizond and extend through Western Armenia to Cilicia and the Mediterranean coastline with the important port of Alexandretta²⁶. This proposal of "United Armenia" (also known as Integral Armenia) was also supported by the American side. The memorandum was made by the Foreign Office in coordination with other Allies to be presented at the upcoming Paris Peace Conference, which commenced on January 18, 1919.

On November 22, 1918, the British War Cabinet during its discussion of the 95th Eastern Report noted that the revelations in the public press regarding the abominable treatment of British prisoners by the Turks were diminishing the false notion of the "clean fighting Turk." Lord Robert Cecil's November 18 speech in the House of Commons on the Armenian Question, was telegraphed to Constantinople on November 18 by the Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, to Admiral Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, Commander-in-Chief of the British Mediterranean Fleet, who had signed the Armistice of Mudros on behalf of the Allies with the Ottomans. The Occupation of Constantinople began with the Allied fleet entering Constantinople in November of 1918 and it was Gough-Calthorpe's flagship, HMS *Superb* that led the way. Admiral Calthorpe was instructed to notify the Turkish government of Lord Cecil's speech with regards to the future of Armenia.

On November 18, 1918, Brigadier General Sir Gilbert Clayton who served as a British army intelligence officer and colonial administrator throughout the Middle East, during and after the war, pointed out that, "it was of the utmost importance," that there a modus vivendi would be achieved between Great Britain and France, when it came to the administration of the new Middle East. This would remove any chance of friction and competition between the two wartime allies. According to General Clayton, France should be recognized as the trustee of an autonomous Lebanon, including Beirut and the Beka'a valley, and also of autonomous Armenia, which would include the port of Alexandretta. Great Britain would be given the task of administering Palestine, and

²⁵ Makhmourian G., Armenia in the Documents of the U.S. Department of State, p. 33.

²⁶ CAB 24/1, Eastern Report, No. XCV, November 21, 1918, Armenia.

serve as the adviser of the independent Arab state, which should include the sanjak (county) of Tripoli and Latakia. Given this arrangement, the economic interests of France would be safeguarded as under the Asia Minor (Sykes-Picot) agreement of 1916, and, according to General Clayton, the settlement of the Zionist question would be greatly facilitated²⁷.

Lord Cecil's speech signaled a "welcomed assurance that the rule of the Ottoman is not to be restored in countries such as Armenia and Cilicia." The report also noted that the whereabouts of the Committee of Union and Progress (C.U.P.) leaders were still unknown, adding that they were "presumably getting into touch with their natural allies, the Bolsheviks." The report also including information that the "anti-Zionist rabbi, Nahum²⁸, who is prominently connected with the C.U.P.," had reached The Hague en route for the United States in order to "propagate for the restoration of Turkish suzerainty in Palestine and Syria."

On November 18, Sir Reginald Wingate also reported that he had been requested to telegraph the protest of the Armenian National Union of Egypt against the omission from the conditions of the armistice of a stipulation that Cilicia and the six Armenian vilayets should be immediately occupied by the Allied troops. The union asked that the French Eastern Legion should be sent to Armenia, and that use should be made of the Caucasian Armenian troops²⁹.

The Armenian grave concern of not occupying the six Armenian provinces and Armenian-populated Cilicia (including cities such as Zeitun, Hadjin, Sis and Adana that were named by name in the original draft of the Armistice of Mudros), which was left out due to pressure by Turkish Minister of the Marine Affairs, Rauf Bey, who signed the armistice on behalf of Ottoman Turkey, came out to be true. The Turks used their old method of pitting one European power against the other. During the negotiations, as the British were anxious to be the country that Turkey offers its surrender were willing to accommodate to a great extent changes and amendments to the Armistice of Mudros, that otherwise would not be omitted. The rivalry with France came into play, as Britain wanted to be the "first" to occupy Constantinople and thus stress its primacy with regards to the future status of the region. The point about occupying six Armenian

²⁷ CAB 24/145 Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Europe, No. XCV, November 25, 1918, f. 154.

²⁸ Chaim Nahum (1872-1960), was a rabbi who after the rise of the Young Turks, with whom he was closely associated, became in 1909 the Chief Rabbi of Turkey. His close connection to the Young Turks would later also be carried over to Mustafa Kemal and his top deputies, virtually all of whom hailed from the Young Turk and CUP background. During the 1922-1923 Conference of Lausanne, which commenced negotiations with the Kemalists and the Allies about granting recognition to the former, Nahum was a prominent and also a signatory to that treaty. For his services to the Turkish government Nahum was given the title of "effendi," or "master." Israeli historians Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio have noted that Nahum opposed Zionism because he believed it was opposed to Ottomanism, to which he wholeheartedly subscribed. Yuval Ben-Bassat, Eyal Ginio, *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule*, pp. 244-245.

²⁹ CAB 24/145 Eastern Report, No. XCV, Armenia, November 21, 1918.

provinces “in case of disturbances” was the last, which also connoted the level of importance that the British placed on this issue.

Britain during and right after the war repeatedly proclaimed that the liberation of the oppressed nationalities of the Ottoman Empire, which first and foremost included the Armenians who had underwent a systematic mass extermination attempt at the hands of the Turkish government, was now being sidelined for Realpolitik. The Armenian issue was used to rally support among the humanitarian driven British constituency which had been very much sympathetic to Armenians since the time of the Congress of Berlin and especially after the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896, however, the British Establishment used the legitimate issue to claim moral superiority in its fight against the Turks, and once the war was over, issues like the control of the Straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, the control of the oil-rich Mosul region in northern Iraq (Mesopotamia), and to lesser extent the question of indemnities in post-war Turkey (including loans that were given to the sultans during the Ottoman period, however, this was mostly done by France).

During his speech on Armenia at the House of Commons, Lord Cecil stated that incredible outrages were committed against the Armenians, who had suffered an unimaginable faith at the hands of the Turks. After stating that Cilicia would be occupied immediately, he went on to say that the Allies could “not permit the evil forces which had been predominant in Constantinople to remain predominant in the (Turkish) government.” The Allied object was the liberation of all those who were entitled to protection. The Armenian atrocities were committed in an organized fashion and the arguments that some Turkish officials were making that they were simply done at the hands of “isolated Turkish brigands,” were not true. They were ordered from Constantinople, so far as he knew, in every case. That was the central fact that needed to be recognized in dealing with the situation. Lord Cecil also underlined that the Armenian massacres were not due to “a religious question.” The Arabs had always protected the Armenians, and when the British army came to Aleppo it had found several bodies of Armenians living there under the protection of the Arabs. And in the same way there was no reason why the Kurds and Armenians could not live perfectly well together if the Turkish influence was removed.

There was already evidence that the Kurds and Armenians were prepared to make terms with one another and to arrange to peacefully coexist. There were also indications that the Turks still did “not learn their lesson,” and were showing signs of trying to carry on their “old policy of delay, and of raising with incredible fertility every kind of objection.” If they had the opportunity they would try their other device of “setting one European nation against another.” Lord Cecil stressed, to a thunderous applause in the House of Commons that, “those days had ended. The Turks would make a profound mistake if they failed to realize that their tactic of delay and resistance was finally finished. The only way for clemency would be if they showed that they had really mended their ways and would hasten to carry out the terms of the armistice to which

they had agreed, and the other conditions which would be put upon them by the justice of their conquerors³⁰.

In November 1918 the Armenian National Delegation, "interpreting the unanimous voice of the whole nation," which included the Republic of Armenia and Western Armenia (the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire), notified the Allied governments that Armenia has won its right to independence by its voluntary and spontaneous participation in the war on the three fronts of the Caucasus, Syria, and France, and by the myriads of victims in men, women and children who were massacred in wholesale manner during the war.

On November 19, 1918, Sir Horace Rumbold reported that Professor George Davis Herron³¹, an American who was known as an outspoken public figure in Europe and who during the war had moved to Geneva, Switzerland and was doing intelligence work for the Allies, had communicated to him the text of a telegram he had received from Mikayel Varandyan, prominent ARF member who served as the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Italy. Prof. Herron also forwarded Ambassador Varandyan's telegram to the United States government.

Varandyan stated that the horrible Turkish invasion caused tremendous damage to Armenia. Armenians, deprived of all exterior help and betrayed by their neighbors who "went over to the enemy," still, with superhuman efforts, were able to create in "the Biblical region of Ararat, the cradle of civilization," an independent republic free of all Turco-German influence. A republic that was recognized by the 2,000,000 Armenians of the Caucasus as their legitimate state, which would serve as the nucleus of the future Republic of Armenia, which, "under the protection of the Allies, will extend over all Russian and Turkish Armenia." The 3,000,000 Armenians who had escaped from Turkish barbarism hoped that, in accordance with the principle of the self-determination of the peoples, the Allied Powers would recognize the existence of the Armenian Republic, which was an accomplished fact.

The Armenian soldiers numbering some 200,000 heroically fought for four years in the Allied ranks on the Eastern, Caucasian, Palestinian, and Syrian fronts. All of them hoped that the rights of Armenians as a belligerent nation would be recognized by the Allies and that the future peace conference would give full satisfaction to the cause of Armenia. The Armenians also hoped that "the sinister assassins" of their people would be punished by the Allies, and that reparations would be made by those responsible for the ruin of Armenia so that the regeneration of that land, "the greatest victim of this vindictive war," would be possible. George Herron added that he had had similar

³⁰ CAB 24/145, Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report, No. XCV, Turkey, The Turks and Armenia, November 21, 1918.

³¹ George Herron in 1917 began contributing regular written reports to the American Legation at Berne, Switzerland. In addition to his intelligence work on behalf of the U.S. State Department, Herron also supplied the British War Office and British Foreign Office with similar reports. Herron's intelligence and analysis was greatly valued by the British, who allotted him 1,000 francs per month so that stenographic help could be hired. Briggs, Mitchell Pirie Briggs, George D. Herron and the European Settlement, AMS Press, 1971, p. 32-33.

appeals to the same effect from a number of other Armenian leaders, some of whom, according to him, had mistaken the Armistice of Mudros as “treaty of peace,” and were thus, in a state of considerable apprehension as to the future of Armenia³².

On November 27, 1918 the U.S. military attaché in London, Stephen L. Slocum, sent a telegram to the Chief of Staff of the U.S. War Department, Peyton C. March notifying him that Prime Minister David Lloyd George believed that Armenia needed to be under an “administrative help of European or American State under a mandate of the League of Nations”³³. A similar possible mandate was also suggested for Turkey (dubbed as “Anatolia”), that is to say, mainly the Turkish inhabited Asia Minor that was west of the Armenian provinces (Turkish Armenia) of the Ottoman Empire³⁴.

That day British Rear-Admiral Richard Webb, the Assistant High Commissioner of Constantinople, reported that the greater part of the remaining Armenians were concentrated in the principal towns of Anatolia. They had now been given liberty to return to their homes, and many were endeavoring to do so. But they were without clothing or food, and their homes were either in ruins or occupied by Muslim emigrants from the Balkans and Syria. Even with good will, it was doubtful that the Turkish government could eject the Balkan Muslim emigrants, and certainly it could not do so without causing great loss of life. The returning Armenian survivors would be more likely to be persecuted when they would reclaim their homes. According to Rear-Admiral Webb, it would be best to endeavor to keep, feed, and clothe the Armenian refugees, at various camps throughout the Near East, through the winter, and meanwhile to make definite arrangements for their return in the spring of 1919³⁵.

James Bryce³⁶, the former British Ambassador to the United States, who strongly condemned the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and raised his voice at the House of Lords as early as July of 1915, also reaffirmed that Armenia must be fully independent. Bryce, with the assistance of historian Arnold J. Toynbee, in 1916 had produced an important documentary record of the Armenian Genocide which contained a compilation of statements from eyewitnesses of the genocide entitled *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*.

In December of 1918 as the Paris Peace Conference was about to convene Bryce stated that:

"English friends of America trust that American public opinion, recognising the sufferings long endured by the Armenian people, its fidelity to the Christian faith, and

³² CAB 24/145 Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report, No. XCV, Turkey, The Turks and Armenia, November 21, 1918,

³³ Makhmourian, Armenia in the Documents of the U.S. Department of State, p. 34.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ CAB 24/145, Eastern Report, No. XCVII, Turkey, December 5, 1918.

³⁶ James Bryce (1838-1922) was a British academic, jurist, historian and Liberal politician, who had travelled throughout Armenia in 1876 and climbed Mount Ararat. He witnessed Turkish misrule towards the Armenian subjects and had developed a deep sympathy for the Armenian people and their plight. He published his impressions of the journey in 1877, in a book entitled Transcaucasia and Ararat.

the splendid services rendered by its soldiers in the war, will heartily support Armenia's claim to complete deliverance from Turkish rule and its own national independence. By its industry, intelligence, and education, Armenia is well fitted for freedom and capable of restoring prosperity to its ancient home"³⁷.

But it turned out that the humanitarian-minded political leaders lost to the shrewd politicians of the Realpolitik. The British political elite, contrary to its wartime lofty public proclamations of securing "self-determination for small nations," "fighting for human rights," and even "democracy," was still very much committed to, by this time supposedly outdated, concepts of imperialism and colonialism.

CONCLUSION

The terms of the Armistice of Mudros were already to a great extent a setback for the just settlement of the Armenian Question as stipulated by British and other Allied leaders during the war. The Turkish side was able to remove the points about the occupation of the Armenian provinces (Western Armenia) by the Allied troops. The British side rushed to conclude the Armistice of Mudros with Turkey, placing at the top of its priority the occupation of Constantinople and securing a free passage of the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles. The British were also determined to hold on to the oil rich territory of Iraq (Mesopotamia) which they had occupied in 1918.

At the conclusion of the Armistice of Mudros, contrary to these stated aims, the British priorities were actually further south in places like the oil-rich Iraq (Mesopotamia) and to certain extent securing the free access of the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles which through the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean Sea linked the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. The British were satisfied on these points and as it later became evident, never lacked the will and ability to flex their military or political muscle when it suited their interests. This was particularly evident in the early to mid-1920s during the dispute of the oil-rich Mosul area of Iraq, which the Turks wanted to include in their own newly proclaimed republic. The British showed their full military and political potential and even utilized the League of Nations to successfully check Turkish ambition in this area, making sure that Mosul remains part of the British controlled Mandate of Iraq.

The French troops which had replaced the British troops in Cilicia in 1919, and were supposed to stay there for good according to the Armistice of Mudros, in 1921 ignominiously abandoned this Armenian-populated region. The French side, contrary to Armenian protests, made a unilateral agreement with the Turkish nationalists in October of 1921, effectively handing over the control of this region to the latter.

The British Foreign Office, after three weeks from the Armistice of Mudros, on November 21, 1918, had prepared a memorandum which outlined the borders of the independent Armenia which included most of its historic territory, stretching from the Black Sea coastline all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. The State of Armenia would

³⁷ The Case of Armenia, p. 18.

include both its Western and Eastern parts that were formerly part of the Ottoman and Russian empires respectively. However, the British were never prepared to make an actual commitment (military and otherwise) to one of their supposed war aims, of holding the Turkish government accountable for what it had done to the Armenians and granting the latter their promised independence based upon the principle of self-determination.

The fact that Western Armenia was not occupied by the Allies turned out to be fatal for the Armenian survivors who during the war already had experienced a horrific genocide at the hands of the Turkish government. The British intelligence reported that Armenians could not maintain this territory on their own. All of the Allies were well aware that Armenia could not have an “unmolested opportunity of autonomous development,” against the Turkish nationalist-Bolshevik alliance, without Allied support.

The armed Turkish regular and irregular formations throughout the Armenian provinces according to the terms of the Armistice of Mudros were to be disarmed. However, this task was not taken up by the Allies, and was left up to the Turkish government officials. Many of these officials simply paid lip service to this Allied demand and did very little, if anything, in carrying out these orders³⁸. By mid-1919, a “new” Turkish nationalist movement headed by “former” Young Turk leader Mustafa Kemal who hailed from the ranks of the C.U.P. that committed the Armenian Genocide, already begun to plan its course of action against the fledgling Armenian state. Kazim Karabekir, a prominent C.U.P. general, reorganized the Eastern Ottoman Army stationed in Western Armenia and in autumn of 1920 launched the invasion and occupation of the Republic of Armenia. While Kazim occupied Armenia from the west, his Bolshevik allies marched into Armenia from the east, thus effectively bringing an end to Armenian independence and occupying all of its territory. As Oliver Baldwin, the son of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who served as an infantry instructor in the Republic of Armenia and remained committed to the Armenian cause for many years after its “betrayal” and occupation, noted that for the British political elite and other Allied leaders “Armenia had served her purpose...that was all that was needed”³⁹.

³⁸ When the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI gave order to Kazim Karabekir to surrender, Karabekir simply refused to obey. No serious efforts were made by the Sultan or the Allies to carry out the order which was one of the points of the Treaty of Mudros.

³⁹ Oliver Baldwin, *The Questing Beast: An Autobiography*, Grayson and Grayson Ltd., London, 1932, p. 175.