

II. The Armenian Question: A Challenge for Geopolitical Analysis

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1. The Diplomatic Framework before World War

The historical events that constitute the basis for a geopolitical interpretation of the Armenian question should be placed within their diplomatic framework, so that the right conclusions can be drawn. If these conclusions happen to verge on cynicism, the blame should not be put on the author of this article but on the nature of international relations, which has been proved anything but humane throughout history.

The origin of these historical events lies in the geopolitical activity -the protagonist of which was Germany- following the Peace Treaty of Frankfurt. From that moment on, Bismarck's main priority in his foreign policy was the overall control of the development of Franco-German relations, correctly believing that France would not resign itself easily to the territorial mutilation, which resulted from the German annexation of the provinces of Lorraine and Alsace. It was quiet obvious for Bismarck that he would soon have to face a war declared by France which would aim at the full restitution of this unresolved matter. He therefore decided to have an unbreakable network of alliances formed around Germany which would protect his country in case of a Franco-Russian collaboration.

Considering peace in the Balkans as the most vulnerable part of his whole foreign policy, he did everything in his power to protect the

peninsula, and especially to avert his country's most faithful ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from getting involved in a likely flaring up in the Balkans. The reason was that the Austro-Hungarian Empire would then inevitably drag Russia into the Balkan game, increasing the danger of a Franco-Russian Agreement, which would badly affect the interests and the domination of the two Central Empires over Europe.

With this kind of thinking, Bismarck managed to maintain until 1890 a strong ring of Euro-Asiatic powers under German influence. The chief instrument of this balance was the Triple Alliance of Germany with its major section of the two Empires, the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian, further strengthened by the secret agreement contracted between the two. This agreement proved to be crucial as far as the Russo-Turkish war was concerned, as we will see below.

Kaiser Wilhelm II's ascend to the throne turned out disastrous for the network of alliances that Chancellor Bismarck had set up with such caution, patience and strategic astuteness. During the period 1890-1907, the whole structure collapsed in three successive stages: 1) 1891-92 with the Franco-Russian military alliance 2) in 1902 with the secret Franco-Italian agreement which ensured Italian neutrality under certain conditions, and 3) with the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, corner-stone of the Entente Cordiale¹ which was completed in 1907 with an agreement signed by Great Britain, France and Russia bearing on the Asian questions. However, this agreement did not turn out as effective as Russia had expected, which in turn rendered the Entente Cordiale pointless. Russia, discontented, adopts, from 1909 on, its own course of action in Central Asia and the Middle East.

So the situation radically changed for Germany; it was its own turn to become hemmed in by a strong circle of alliances for the disruption of which Germany spared no pains or efforts from 1905 until 1918. However, the awakening of Holy Russia in 1912, after the temporary detente caused by its defeat during the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, led to the outbreak of violence in the Balkans. The Austro-Hungarian Empire soon got involved in the maelstrom as it was interested in the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina; in other words Bismarck's worst fears and worries came true.

The events that were taking place during this very period at the

1. As written in the prototype.

Russo-Turkish borders take us closer to the heart of the problem. Great Britain was most annoyed by the declaration of war between Russia and Turkey on 13 April 1877; a war based, as far as Russia was concerned, on the secret protocol between Austro-Hungary and Russia which conceded the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Double Monarchy. Therefore, Great Britain, fearing that the Russian forces would occupy Constantinople and bring the Dardanelles straights under their control, sent the Royal Fleet to the Dardanelles on 29 January 1878. Moreover, Great Britain did not omit to exercise pressure on Austro-Hungary to intervene and quell the Russian aspirations; the Double Monarchy did not give in though, as it looked forward -with some concern- to the benefits stemming from the secret agreement with Russia, namely the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Yet the prospect of an Anglo-Russian war together with the position of power St Petersburg held at that time, led the Tsar to sign the propitious Treaty of St Stefan on 3 March 1878.

According to this Treaty, on the one hand Austro-Hungary was amply rewarded for its patience with the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand Russia founded the well-known Great Bulgaria whose south boundaries were -at last- washed by the Aegean Sea, while Russia gained the territories of Kars in Asia Minor, of Saturn on the Black Sea and the north-eastern provinces of the Middle East, virtually obtaining a second passage to the Mediterranean through the port of Alexandria. According to article 16 of the treaty, significant provisions were made for the Armenian people, their liberties and their rights.

It would be worth mentioning here that regardless of the actual will of the Armenian people, Russia, taking advantage of its pro-Russian sentiments deriving from the fact that the Armenian communities living in the provinces within the Russian territory were being fairly treated and that the two nations shared the same religion, sought to use the Armenian nation as a bridgehead for the Middle Eastern territories. In this way, Russia could appear to be making certain concessions out of good will, which would go along with the spirit of self-government of the people, the spirit of the French revolution, which prevailed in the uprisings of the Balkan ethnic groups.

Nevertheless, we ought to mention on grounds of impartiality that the provisions favorable to the Armenian people made by article 16 of the Treaty were the least possible that the two contracting parties could have offered.

To its great annoyance, Great Britain saw that its interests in the Suez Canal, in the Persian Gulf, in other words along the road to India which happened to cross the Armenian and Afghan territories, as well as in the south-eastern Mediterranean would be at stake. Eventually, Great Britain managed to make the Tsar agree that he would stop his troops' advance to the Russo-Turkish front and that he would not proceed any further into the interior of the Middle East. Moreover, taking advantage of its good relations with the Sultan, on account of the services it had been persistently rendering him by virtue of the Disraeli doctrine, Great Britain succeeded in having Cyprus ceded to its rule so as to be able to control Russia's exit to the Mediterranean through Alexandretta.

Bismarck, on the other hand, caring for the maintenance of the circle of alliances around Germany, appeared as a mediator between Great Britain and Russia, having realized two things: firstly, that Britain, being unhappy and concerned, would not stay away from the developments in the Balkans obviously affecting Austro-Hungary and its territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina; secondly, that the double descent of the Slavs to the Mediterranean and the control they could possibly wield over the road to the British colonies in India, through a potential Armenian Christian state, would inevitably bring about a conflict between Russia and Britain, which would overthrow the European balance of power he had so painfully struggled for. Bismarck's mediation led to the Berlin Congress which virtually overruled the St Stefan Treaty. According to the congress, the entire southern part of the Great Bulgaria was ceded to the Ottoman Empire, so that Britain would be satisfied, and a totally different situation was found in terms of the Armenian nation's liberties and rights within the Ottoman Empire. Article 61 granted a significantly reduced -in terms of quantity and quality- number of liberties and rights to the Armenians. The Sublime Port would have to guarantee the security of the Armenian populations against the Kirghizians and the Kurds as well as the necessary improvements in matters of regional requirements within the provinces of the Ottoman Empire inhabited by Armenians. This article, however, had the following diplomatic weaknesses:²

- a. it did not impose the immediate implementation of the reforms

2. O.-S. Agabatian, *Armenia and the Armenian Question*, Stochastis, Athens 1988 (in Greek).

by the Sublime Port in relation to the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Armenian territories ceded to Turkey,

b. it brought the implementation of the reforms under the control of all the contracting Powers rendering this point totally inoperative on account of the constant conflicts among the Powers, and

c. it did not confine the implementation of the reforms in the provinces of Mus, Van and Erzurum where the Armenian element was predominant; it therefore enabled the Sublime Port to pretend that, given the spreading of the Armenian populations throughout the largest part of Asia Minor, the likely implementation of the reforms would threaten the cohesion of the empire.

Accordingly, a French diplomat was very right to state: "Never before has diplomacy, which ex officio or out of necessity is inclined to half measures, produced anything more imperfect and more clearly precarious".³

Nevertheless, the most significant geopolitical fact resulting from the Berlin Congress was that Germany managed to obtain a leading role as far as the financial control of the Ottoman Empire was concerned; a fact which in no way pleased the French and the British. As for Russia, it merely achieved the recognition for a Slavic nation -the Bulgarian- which could eventually develop into a bridge for Slavic interests towards the Mediterranean; yet Russia was discontented with the final outcome of the Congress and embittered by Bismarck, whom she held responsible for this outcome, This discontent and bitterness led the authorities in St Petersburg to start considering the conclusion of a Franco-Russian alliance. On Bismarck's resignation in March 1890, "his" European system of balance which counted a lot on the Germano-Russian alliance started collapsing. The process was completed in 1893 with the signing of the Franco-Russian agreement and with Tsar Alexander III's realizing that Russia no longer enjoyed Germany's support. The rivalry among the Great Powers started all over again having disastrous effects on the Greeks and the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. Abdul Hamid, the "Mad Tyrant of Terror" as Anatole France named him or even the "Great Murderer" according to Gladstone, taking advantage of this rivalry (1894-1896) and manipulating the armed Kurds, proceeded to extensive massacres in

3. H. Pasdermadjian, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, Librairie Orientale H. Samuelian, Paris 1964.

the Armenian regions which ran into 300,000 victims and aroused international public opinion. Meanwhile, in 1895, and during the blood bath, Kaiser Wilhelm II did everything in his power to undermine Lord Salisbury's pursuit, a partition plan of the sick man of Europe, the Ottoman Empire, allowing Abdul Hamid to proceed with his horrid task. Lord Salisbury, becoming aware of Germany's involvement and increasingly afraid of Reich's future claims in the vital area of Asia Minor, stated in September of the same year that H. M. fleet would intervene in the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Strait. The Tsar's response was immediate; he told the Sultan that in the event of British intervention, he himself would defend the Straights. A similar event occurred a year later (1886).

The rupture between Britain and Russia downgraded the importance of the Armenian question and France's attitude, which notified Salisbury that it too desired the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in line with Russia and Germany, made things worse for Britain and the Armenian people.

It was evident that Germany had been acclaimed the protector of the Ottoman Empire, a fact which was further established by Wilhelm II's journey to Constantinople and Jerusalem and his proclamation as a hero of ...Islam (October 1889). Obviously it was not a matter of the Kaiser's change of faith; it merely represented the inauguration of German intervention in the geo-economic area of the Ottoman Empire. The German claims in Asia Minor were made perfectly clear on the announcement of the agreement on the construction of the Bosphorus-Bagdad railway, reaching Berlin to the north, which would be funded by powerful financial trusts supported by the Deutsche Bank.

On 5 March 1903, the agreement which finally assigned the construction work to the German company for 99 years was signed, after the rival French companies had been eliminated from the competition. The German contracting company, apart from the exploitation of the main railway, also had the possibility to expand the railway network towards north Syria, the Persian Gulf, and Armenia, as well as to exploit the adjacent underground deposits. Considering that apart from the provision about the passage of the railway line through Armenian territories, there were also considerable oil deposits in the same area well known to the Germans, why should we wonder about the bad fortune of the Armenian people? To be more specific: oil deposits, still in use nowadays, within the Armenian territories of Asia Minor exist in

the area west of Diyarbakir and east of the Euphrates river, in the area adjacent to the sources of the Tigris river and north of Diyarbakir and in the area northeast of Batman and south of Bitlis. There is one more factor making the fight of the Armenians for the acquisition of their territories even tougher today: the pipeline which serves all the above mentioned oil deposits between Kurtalan (south-west of Bitlis) and Alexandretta and which was obviously constructed later.

At the same time, the assumption of the office of the Great Vizier of the Ottoman Empire by Midhad Pasha, leader of the Young Turks' party, on 22 May 1876, is associated with Abdul Hamid's acceptance of a constitutional chart inspired by Midhad; according to this chart every citizen of the Ottoman Empire was an Ottoman and their official religion was Islam.

Yet the situation that would prevail after the application of Midhad's ideas would not be as simple and positive as it appeared at first sight. Midhad, recognizing the Greeks and the Armenians as Ottomans, on the one hand, was giving equal civil rights to everyone but on the other they were all being amalgamated into Ottomanism.

After Midhad's downfall and assassination by Abdul Hamid in 1884, the Young Turks' party suffered a severe blow; nevertheless it was reformed in Paris in 1897 under the name "Union and Progress" and transferred its base to Salonica. Later on, in 1907, a party congress was held once more in Paris with the participation of different ethnic groups from the Ottoman Empire, among which the Armenian party of Tsasnaktsoutioun. In the course of this congress the question of an armed revolution, aiming at the establishment of a status in conformity with the constitutional model of Midhad, was raised for the first time. The place where the congress of the New Turks' party "Union and Progress" was held shows once more the French interest in the developments within the Ottoman Empire. It should not be forgotten that the Moroccan crisis of 1905, which lasted until 1911, on the eve of the Balkan Wars, was in progress at that time as far as France was concerned, causing a great deal of friction, between France and Germany. Naturally, France didn't view favorably the German interventions in the Ottoman Empire and was trying to either create a French oriented government in the Sublime Port or at least to create a diversion against Germany which made huge financial advances in the Middle East. According to Quai d'Orsay this opportunity was offered to France by the Young Turks. On the other hand, as we have al-

ready seen, France could never condone the partition of the Ottoman Empire, which exclusively favored Britain, Russia and perhaps even Germany, because France hadn't yet got the diplomatic and military grounds to help it take advantage of the premature rending of the 'Sick Man's garment'! For Quai d'Orsai something like that was still untimely. This was an opinion which the Armenian nation had no reason to support. Unfortunately, however, the latter was never asked.

The Young Turks perceived the great importance of the awakening of the nationalistic consciences in the Balkan peoples since 1903, Macedonia being in the heart of the ethnic riots. It was quite clear that if this wave of nationalistic uprisings was transferred to Asia Minor, there would be no place for the Young Turks there since they were fully aware of the fact that they were only a minority in the territories of Asia Minor. Therefore the burning question posed for them was: "either the homeland of the others will become our homeland or we will be left without one". This very concept of the Young Turks constituted the mold of the premeditated genocides during the 20th century, such as those of the Jews and the Gypsies, which constituted the cornerstone of the nationalistic ideologies for the achievement of a new world order, beyond the dictates of peoples and history. The ethnic strife constituted the pivot of these highly aspiring planning centers, which, achieving through it the desired so called "ethnic purification", could hope for the transformation of the nation according to the "appropriate" patterns. This policy caused intense uprisings of ethnic groups all over the Empire: the uprisings of the Druses of Syria, the Arabs in Palestine and Iraq in 1910, the Arabs of Yemen in 1911 and of the Balkan peoples in 1912.

This is when the process for the extermination of the Greeks and the genocide of the Armenians of Asia Minor started: and although the former could be repulsed to their metropolitan base, the latter had no such way out since their physical, geographic and historic base was the present southeastern and southwestern Turkey. In the Congress of Young Turks held in Salonica in 1911, the resolutions for the extermination of the Armenians beside the other ethnic groups were made. Even the simple reading of these resolutions could convince a reader of good will that they do not tally with the morality or the logic of international law. The passage of the resolutions explicitly presages the processes of ethnic purification with clear reference to violence. It is stated, for instance that: "The ethnic groups are worthless elements... the Ottomanisation of all Turkish citizens should be concluded... and

in this matter we have to even resort to violence". Briefly, it is about methods which are explicitly condemned by the international community.

As we have already mentioned, at that time, the Balkans were in ferment and as the peoples there were getting ready for the Balkan wars, the Young Turks panicked. As a result, the latter entered into an alliance with the Germans, who, on the other hand, saw their plans for a descent of the German Reich toward the Mediterranean seriously threatened if Russia triumphed over the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans, therefore creating an unfavorable for the German interests "security zone" at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, which was under German control. Additionally it should also be mentioned that this particular geopolitical planning anticipated the takeover of the Ottoman trade by Germany. Something like that presupposed the snatching of any commercial activities from the Greeks and Armenians, who were anyway considered to be servants of the British and the French. German foreign policy had managed to repulse Holy Russia to the north and the British and French to the south. What should be done next was to wipe out the Greek and Armenian elements, so that the Reich could firstly become the great commercial guardian of the Ottoman Empire, secondly secure the rich oil deposits of Baku and Mosul -which Germany claimed from the British and the French- and finally take control over the commercial passages to India, depriving Britain of its vital area.

The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 resulted, after the crushing defeat of Turkey, in Russia's submission of a draft to the Sublime Port on 3 July 1913 with the Allies' consent. This draft, which was debated within the ambassadorial meeting at the summer residence of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in Constantinople, included a series of reforms concerning Armenia and was based on former Ottoman pledges taken in the course of international conferences and formal diplomatic acts. The outcome of this ambassadorial meeting, a passage of six points bearing on the rights, the liberties and the administrative division of the Armenian territories in Turkey, was tabled at the Congress of London in September of the same year. On 8 February 1914, Turkey and Russia signed, on the basis of the above mentioned passage, a mutually approved plan of reforms which made provisions for the division of Turkish Armenia in two regions: a) the northern provinces of Erzurum, Trabzon and Sivas and b) the southern provinces of Van, Bitlis, Kharpout and Diyarbakir. These two

regions would be under the surveillance of two European General Inspectors coming from countries which remained neutral during the Balkan wars.

Unfortunately the declaration of World War I allowed Turkey, which entered the war fighting against the Allies, not to abide by the signed agreement and to deport the two General Inspectors: the Dutch Westenenk and the Norwegian Hoff. This was the long awaited opportunity for the single-party Turkish state of the Young-Turkish party “Union and Progress” to implement the decisions made by the Congress of the Young Turks held in Salonica in 1911; namely to proceed with the genocide of the Armenian people which happened to dwell within the Ottoman boundaries. Besides, the government of the Young Turks, actuated by prevailing ideas of pan-Turkism, aimed at the occupation of the territories lying east of the Caucasus and Central Asia, countries which constituted the cradle of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the connection of the Ottomans with the Turkish populations of the Tatars in Azerbaijan, of the Turkmenians in Turkmenistan and those in Uzbekistan, which were under the Tsar’s control, would allow the setting up of the “Empire of the Steppes”, a fundamental aspiration of pan-Turkism. Yet, the presence of the Armenians in the Caucasus, a people of different origin, language and religion, with profound awareness of its national identity, a people which had already suffered from the murderous repression of the Sublime Port and was, therefore, bound to turn to Russia, greatly worried the party of “Union and Progress”. The solution had to be radical and it was: genocide.

The Armenian populations residing in Constantinople and Smyrna were not initially harmed. But their turn soon came. An illustrative example is the massacre of Smyrna in 1922, when the Armenians together with the Greeks were mercilessly slaughtered. Of the 2,026,000 Armenians who dwelled in Turkish Armenia before 1914 only 100,000 were still alive after the end of World War I in the area that is currently known as Turkey. Almost half a million homeless and persecuted people found refuge in the territories of the present Soviet Armenia and other countries of the Middle East, Europe and USA. At least 1.5 million Armenians were slaughtered in pogroms organized by the Turkish government and the Turkish Home Secretary, Talaat Pasha, who was very systematic when it came to the “national purification”.

2. The diplomatic framework after World War I

The well-known and praiseworthy stance of the Armenian people on the side of the Allies during World War I allowed the Armenians to anticipate the implementation of the promises made to them in the course of the Congress of London at 3 September 1913. The Armenian people had every right to expect the support of the Allies in a fair and righteous settlement of their national problem, the reasons being: firstly, the 200,000 regular soldiers in the Russian Army and the 20,000 volunteers on the Caucasus Front; secondly, the 5,000 soldiers on the side of the Anglo-French troops on the Palestinian Front; finally, the commendations given by General Allenby and the Russian officers for the bravery and self-sacrifice of the Armenians in the course of the battles.

After the Russian Revolution, however, developments were starting; the Provisional Government detached the Armenian territories occupied by the Russian troops from the Russian state and proclaimed them territories under Armenian administration, in order to settle all the pendencies. On 25 September 1917, the Provisional Government acknowledged the peoples' right to self-determination.

The example of the Provisional Government was then followed by the Soviet government, which declared by decree the right of Turkish Armenia to self-determination within the Federation of Transcaucasia. After the end of the war and the Turkish signing of the Moudros Treaty on 30 January 1918, the Armenian forces occupied once again the regions of Kars, Ardahan and Ugli, becoming masters of a total area of 54,000 square kilometers. Nonetheless, the multinational state of Transcaucasia, which consisted of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, was not meant to last long for two reasons; firstly because after the withdrawal of the Russian troops, due to the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (3 March 1918), the far more powerful Ottoman forces attacked; secondly because the stance of the Azeris was marked by irredentist views and pan-Turkist tendencies, something which led to the fragmentation of the unity within the federation to the advantage of Turkey. According to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on 3 March 1918, Russia ceded to Turkey the areas of Batum, Olp, Ardahan and Kars which it had previously gained at the St Stefan Treaty in 1876. Russia, of course, made these cessions because it could no longer keep all these areas under control and therefore they were almost coercive. The

Ottomans, having taken this Treaty for granted, demanded that the Armenians and the Georgians should accept the cession of the above mentioned areas. Additionally, the Sublime Port claimed the political, military and economic control over the federation. Initially, both nations refused. Yet, the Azeris' position was anything but negative towards this perspective. In this turmoil, the federation disintegrated and the Georgians turned to the Germans for protection, a fact which was rather welcomed by the latter, while the Armenians and the Azeris declared their independence in May 1918.

As was expected, the new circumstances allowed Turkey to impose the signing of the Batum Treaty, on the newly established states on 4 June 1918. With this Treaty, the Independent Republic of Armenia was acknowledged but, unlike Georgia which was protected by Germany, Armenia had to give up some of its territories and to withdraw its troops from the oil deposits of Baku. Naturally, after the coup of a regional pro-Soviet organization which put Baku under Soviet control, Turkey did not miss the opportunity to occupy the area in September 1918.

The British were genuinely dissatisfied with the course things were taking because Baku could be the ideal base for operations by the Turkish fleet towards the steppes of Turkmenistan and the territories of Turkestan, according to the provisions made by the pan-Turkish plan. As a result, Afghanistan and the road to India were at stake and therefore so were the most significant British interests. However nothing of the kind happened. Turkey capitulated a few weeks later, the government of the Young Turks collapsed and the party of "Union and Progress" split.

3. Middle-eastern lobbying

The diplomatic lobbying which led to the annulment of the Treaty of Sevres was intense and typical of the unorthodox methods used and the broken promises. What is important though is to locate the geopolitical motives and interests which dictated this particular behavior, especially on the British part, because the diplomatic history of the years 1915-1920 is in any case well-known.

During that period the protagonists in the southern part of the Ottoman Empire were Britain, France, Italy and Hussein Sharif of

Mecca together with the Arab nationalists of Syria. The principal diplomatic axis around which the final negotiations orbited was the Sykes-Picot Treaty signed in March 1916. These negotiations meant, on the one hand, the ratification of the British imposition on the Middle East and, on the other hand, the annulment of the Treaty of Sevres, the perpetuation of the Armenian tragedy and the reinforcement of the pan-Turkish aspirations of Ankara.

Britain proceeded to direct contacts with the Arabs of the Middle East in order to protect its own interests. The English government of India though, which had taken charge of these contacts, managed to pass its own views which favored Arab neutrality and not the setting up of an independent Arab state as a substitute for the Ottoman Empire. It was obvious that the colonial British mentality could not accept easily the interference, not to mention the creation of new geopolitical parties to the "Great Game". The diplomatic correspondence between the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, and the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein, aimed, at least as far as the Foreign Office was concerned, at the securing of the neutrality of the Arabs if not at their enlisting on the side of the Allies. Britain, faithful to its invariable geopolitical priorities, aimed at the establishment of an Arab state which would be designed to become a substitute for the services hitherto rendered by the Ottoman Empire, namely the protection of the British road to India.

Being aware and approving, from the very beginning of the British-Arab talks in Spring 1915, of the relations of prince Feisal, son of the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein, with the underground Syrian organizations of Arab nationalists, Al-Fatah and Al-Ahd, Britain actually was playing on two chessboards: firstly, Britain had de facto "Arab" pressure, of which it could not be officially accused, put on France, which had designs on the south-western coastline of Asia Minor, namely the Armenian Cilicia; secondly, Britain consolidated its own position in the area north of Palestine, which was considered to be basic British territory for the control of Suez, through Feisal's influence. The British wish for indirect exertion of pressure on the French emerged from the fact that it was not politically fair for Britain to directly oppose its Allies; at the same time Britain had to make sure that it would be able to negotiate freely during the forthcoming talks about the distribution of spheres of interest in the Middle East between them. It was also a way for Britain to retaliate for Quai d'Orsay's underground relations

with Palestinian and Syrian Arab nationalists, which were fostered even before the beginning of the war. Besides the announcement made by the Foreign Office Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, in October 1915 to Paris about the deliberations between McMahon and Hussein was designed to make the waning French influence on the area clear to all interested parts.

The tendencies of the whole mesh of British strategic aspirations were described in the well-known Protocol of Damascus, fruit of the diplomatic correspondence between McMahon and Hussein. According to this protocol, Hussein committed himself to attack the Ottoman Empire, supporting the initiatives taken by Britain in the area while the British committed themselves to support the independence of all the Arab-speaking areas of the Fertile Crescent except for the coastal zone which lies west of Hama, Homs, Aleppo and Damascus; in other words, the coastline of Lebanon and Cilicia which was resided by Armenian populations and was destined to be under French rule, since France had been claiming that area since March 1915. In view of the British superiority and having virtually obtained Lebanon and Cilicia, France consented to the signing of the Sykes-Picot agreement in March 1916. The agreement was later also ratified by Russia in exchange for the north-east Armenian provinces of Turkey, the western bank of the Bosphorus, the Marmara Sea and the Dardanelles. Britain did not keep its promises to the Sharif of Mecca, but the Sykes-Picot agreement was kept secret until the Soviets seized power in Russia and made known the existence of the agreement in December 1917.

A year earlier, in December 1916, Lloyd George had become Prime Minister in Britain. His strategic doctrine favored the occupation of the whole of Palestine by Britain, so that Britain could effectively protect its interests in the Suez Canal. Britain also believed that with the help of Zionism, which was supposed to have a great hold over France and the environment of President Wilson, combined with the depleted military power of France and Russia, would be able to totally exclude France from Palestine and to secure the participation of the US in the war on the side of the Allies. However, the Bolsheviks' rise to power in Russia spoiled these plans.

Two events led to the emergence of the Zionist movement, which wanted the Palestinian territories for a Jewish home, allowing Germany to intervene as an arbitrator between the Ottomans and the Jews in

order to reach an agreement upon the establishment of an independent Jewish home in Palestine.

The first event was the renunciation of colonialism by the provisional government of Russia, and the second was the similar attitude that President Wilson's government kept after the announcement of his 14 principles about the peoples' rights to self-determination.

The newly formed situation was in no respect favorable to London. First of all, if the peace talks had started, as the climate of the Russian and American attitude demanded, it would have been highly possible that the war would come to an untimely end and the Arab uprising, which had just secured the area lying at the frontiers between Palestine and Egypt, would not have managed to carry out its task to the detriment of the British interests. Secondly, if Germany had succeeded in securing the establishment of a Jewish home, Berlin would have gained great influence in the area, a fact that would have put the British status in the Suez Canal in danger. As a result, Lord Balfour sent a letter to Lord Rothschild informing him about Britain's decision to support the demand for a Jewish national home in Palestine, provided that the political and religious rights of the other ethnic groups dwelling in Palestine would not be affected. Of course, Britain offered before Germany what it considered to be inevitable. On the other hand, Britain made sure that the wording was ambiguous enough to guarantee its constant presence as an arbiter of the implementation of its decision. Besides, the Zionists did not consent either to an armistice that would provide the Arabs and the Ottomans with the possibility of designs on the Palestinian territories. Subsequently, all the directly interested parts were fully satisfied and, most of all, Balfour, who hoped that the Zionists, who appeared to have a renewed hold over the top ranking cadres of the Russian revolution, would avert the provisional government of Russia from signing an armistice with the Central Empires, something which never happened. What London did achieve through the Zionist organizations of France and Italy was the recognition of the Balfour declaration by the governments of these two European countries and therefore the acknowledgement of the British superiority in Palestine. This recognition would secure the continuation of the war, which in any case served their interests in that same area too.

Regarding the second part, namely the Caucasus, we should bear in mind that the British policy was both unfortunate and clumsy, and especially its handling of Nagorno Karabagh. On the one hand, being

afraid that Germany would also increase its influence over Armenia and that through the strategic area of the mountainous Karabagh it would sooner or later be able to bring the oil deposits of Baku under its control, and on the other hand not wishing to disturb the Soviet Union which could control Germany eastward, it let Stalin take Karabagh from Armenia, which was physically entitled to it, and concede it to Azerbaijan under the veil of some vestigial form of self-rule.

Stalin's action intended to avoid Turkey's possible annoyance as the newly established Soviet empire was still weak. Additionally, we should take into account that Britain had already oriented its interests towards the Middle East and by that pursuing this doctrine it lost a great opportunity for of the democratic West: the strengthening of an independent Armenian state which would operate as a "buffer-state" against the pan-Islamic, pan-Turkish, new-Slavic trends which had subversive and overthrowing effects on the area constantly threatening the balance between the North and the South.

Meanwhile, on 19 January 1920, the Supreme Allies Council recognized de facto the independence of Armenia and its government. This recognition, however, could not prejudice the question of the possible frontiers of the state. In March 1920, the Supreme Council of the League of Nations acknowledged that the setting up of an Armenian state and its entry in the League of Free Nations was a duty towards humanity. Yet the disagreement between the British and the French about the Syrian mandate perpetuated the unsettled matter of the Armenian frontiers and forced President Wilson to actively intervene by sending Henry King and Charles Crane to the Middle East in order to look into the situation. The French refused to participate in this mission while Lloyd George, while not sending his own representatives, committed himself to accept the findings of the committee, whatever they might be.

However, the findings of the King and Crane committee proved to be contrary to the British expectations, for, on the one hand, the possible placement of Syria under a mandate was appreciated as the second coercive option and, on the other hand, when the representatives of Mesopotamia, rich in oil deposits, met King and Crane, they clearly set against the placement of Syria under any mandate declaring at the same time their objection to the entire notion of the mandate. Unfortunately, the Committee's findings also proved to be contrary to the expectations of President Wilson, who was favorably disposed towards

the demands of the Zionist movement. The two delegates appeared to be absolutely opposed to the idea of the establishment of a Jewish state in that area. They suggested that Palestine and Syria should become one unified state and that the Zionists should restrict their demands with regard to the Palestinian territories. The outcome was that the entire proposal was buried; it was not discussed in the course of the peace conference in Paris and did not see the light of publicity until 1922, when the map of the Middle East had already been settled. In the light of this lobbying, it becomes easier to comprehend the absence of the American delegation during the last and most crucial part of the proceedings of the conference which led to the attenuation of the peoples' vindications of their right to self-determination. As a result the Armenian question was totally neglected until it was finally forgotten. The mandates would not be acquired by anyone until the US redefined their attitude regarding the Middle East. The settling of the mandates, the setting up or not of a Jewish state in Palestine and the distribution of the oil deposits of Mesopotamia between Britain and France led to the San Remo Treaty which was signed in April 1920. Two months later, in June 1920, Armenia lost its case: the American Congress rejected all the agreements contracted by President Wilson and prevented America from playing the decisive role it was meant to play during the post-war period.

Wilson, however, presented his report concerning the frontiers between Turkey and Armenia on 22 November 1920. But it was too late because, as the American Senate did not agree to send American troops to Armenia in order to impose the implementation of President Wilson's proposals, the report remained invalid. In spring 1920, France, unable to confront the unified forces of Emir Feisal, the Syrian Arab nationalists, who reacted in the way Britain had anticipated, and Kemal in Cilicia, was forced to conclude a treaty with Turkey on 30 May 1920. The forthcoming Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) made provisions for the establishment of an independent Armenian state whose frontiers would be drawn up later after the above mentioned ineffective arbitration of President Wilson. Yet the capitulation of France in Cilicia, which was an inevitable result of its rivalry with Britain, enabled, on the one hand, the imperial government to prolong the negotiations with the Allies about the ratification of the Treaty of Sevres and on the other hand, it allowed Kemal, whose prestige appeared strengthened, to reject the Treaty of Sevres. Furthermore, a

month after the signing of the Treaty of Sevres, in September 1920, Kemal together with Moscow took advantage of the lack of interest caused by the rivalry between the great powers and turned against Armenia which, being unable to stand against two fronts at the same time, concluded the Treaty of Alexandropol on 2 December 1920. One third of the Armenian state fell under the domination of Turkey while the remaining two thirds formed the Soviet Republic of Armenia. The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24 July 1923, not only did not raise the question of an independent Armenian state but, as Winston Churchill wrote, “the name of Armenia was not even mentioned”. British pressure was instrumental in the attainment of this outcome since the concession of the oil fields of Mosul, on which Britain had always had designs, was of greater interest to its policy than the fate of the Armenian people. In Lord Curzon’s words “oil weighed a lot more than Armenian blood”.

4. Conclusions

Having said all this, we could very easily deduce that the Turkish power, whether it was held by the Sultan and exercised in the name of the Ottoman empire or was in the hands of the Young Turks and exercised in the name of Turkish nationalism or in the hands of the Kemalists and exercised in the name of modernization and democracy, was invariably oriented towards the extermination of the Armenians as well as of all the other 47 minorities -officially registered by experts at Tübingen University- dwelling in the Turkish territory.

The modern Turkish trends according to which Turkey wishes to act as the “Big Brother” of the Muslim pockets in the Balkans, the blunt pan-Turkish ideology and method manifested in every move that Turkey makes, the provocative contempt of each and every rule of international law should lead us to the conclusion that Greece must not turn a blind eye to the Turkish activity in the Muslim Republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. If Turkey manages to bend the Armenian resistance in Karabagh in favor of Azerbaijan, which is used as the main Turkish springboard to the republics of Central Asia, it will immediately appear as the most reliable representative of Islam, not only in that area but also in the Balkans. The Western world made the mistake once in the years 1919-23, when Armenia was left at the

mercy of Turkey and the Soviet Union. Yet it is expected that the same mistake will not be repeated today, especially under the present geopolitical circumstances in Central Asia, where Iran, Turkey and the ex-Soviet army fight for the acquisition of control over both the republics, Central Asia and the Balkans.

The present situation presses for the creation -besides the powerful and economically prosperous Armenia- of an independent state, Kurdistan. This new state, functioning as a “buffer state” among Arabs, Iranians, Syrians and Iraqis, in combination with a fully powerful Armenia on the one hand, and Israel, an already powerful state in international affairs on the other, could guarantee the existence of an essentially secure situation in Central Asia, the Fertile Crescent and Suez.

With these preconditions realized population mobility and the transfer of goods and capital from these areas to North Western Europe and the Indian Ocean will be insured. However, if the West abandons the peace issue in the region under the carte of pan-Turkish policy, a chain of eruptions will spark among Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the wholly unstable Afghanistan, countries which suspect one another.

After Armenia it will be the turn of the eastern territories of Bulgaria, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cyprus, Thrace and the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea. The results would be disastrous for the peace in the area, the reason being that the decay of the Kemalist regime induced by the pro-Iranian Shiite Islamic movements, will definitely forward the “Islamic revolution” and the Iranian “holy-war” conceptions to the Balkan zone. We have recently had, for that matter, numerous proofs of blunt “holy-war” talk by the Muslim leader of Bosnia, Alia Izet-bekovitch. At this stage, however, Turkey cannot even convince itself about its Islamic dogmatic purity, therefore the government of Tehran will take over. Perhaps, it will be then that the sorcerer’s apprentices of the international metropolitan staffs will realize their mistake, but it will be too late both for them and the whole of humanity.

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