CHAPTER FOUR

SHADES OF DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION: AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS WITH TURKEY (1923–1937)

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Scholars dwell more on explaining the origins and conduct of wars than how they end, though it is the latter that shapes the lives of future generations. Peace treaties, whether dictated or negotiated, and recognition of new states de facto or de jure resonate on future relations. The way in which dialogue is carried out by representatives, until and even after formal diplomatic relations are established, can make or break relations. This study addresses the end of the First World War and the interwar years when diplomatic relations were restored between Turkey and the United States. Diplomatic recognition is identified as an act by which one state acknowledges the legitimacy of another, thereby expressing its intent to bring into force the legal consequences of recognition. An important component of diplomatic recognition is reciprocity. Although ambassadors were exchanged in 1927, a missing component of reciprocity was that an American ambassador did not take up full time residence in Turkey’s capital, Ankara until 1937. Therefore this study secondly accounts for the conjuncture, processes as well as stages, until Washington accorded diplomatic reciprocity to Turkey. Diaries, official correspondence, and biographies of U.S. representatives who are better known, such as Admiral Mark L. Bristol, Ambassador Joseph C. Grew and lesser known diplomats such as Robert Skinner, John Van A. Mac Murray, Howland Shaw, Wallace Murray, and Jefferson Patterson, who served in Turkey, enable us to draw a reasonably coherent picture. A glimpse at the domestic situation in Turkey of the 1930s through U.S. records and the eventual full time residence of the American Ambassador in Ankara by 1937 reveal how shades of recognition were transformed into full diplomatic reciprocity.

October 29, 1923 marks the declaration of the Republic of Turkey, three months after the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed between the former Allies of the First World War and the Government of the National Assembly of Turkey. Since the United States and Ottoman
Empire had not declared war on each other and that the former had chosen to be an “associated” and not an “allied” power, there was no peace to be made between them. However, a formal relationship had to be resumed after the Ottoman government had severed diplomatic relations with the United States in April 1917. The interregnum from 1919 to 1923 did not allow an official diplomatic relationship to resume because a state of war and foreign occupation of Turkey continued. Only after the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed between the Allies and the Government of the National Assembly of Turkey on July 24, 1923, did the United States attempt to resume ties by treaty with the new political body in Turkey. Hence, on August 6, 1923 a “General Treaty” or the “Treaty of Amity and Commerce” as it is generally referred to was signed in Lausanne by Joseph C. Grew, then U.S. Minister in Switzerland, bearing the signatures of İsmet Pasha (İnönü), Dr. Rıza Nur and Hasan (Saka) on Turkey’s part. But by 1927 the U.S. Senate had denied ratification of the treaty. Nonetheless, after an exchange of notes for a modus vivendi, ambassadors were exchanged the same year, and slightly reworded treaties of “Commerce and Navigation” and “Establishment” were ratified respectively in 1930 and 1932. It was not until 1937 that an American ambassador, John Van A. Mac Murray, took up full time residence in Turkey’s capital Ankara, although all other major countries had established embassies and ambassadors in Ankara by 1931. An exception was Italy, which moved its embassy permanently to Ankara in 1941. However symbolic the American move may have been, it sanctioned complete diplomatic recognition after a fifteen year interval. These shades of recognition then turned into a fully fledged relationship with complete official reciprocity.

This study initially explores the diplomatic conduct of two significant personae who helped shape the future relations between Turkey and the United States; High Commissioner Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol (served in İstanbul, 1919–1927), and a career diplomat Joseph

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