
This edited book is composed of an introduction, six chapters, an epilogue, an appendix and a [selected] bibliography. It is about “the American Dimension” of the diplomatic relations between the U.S.A and Turkey. The contributors made use of the semi-official reports, prepared by the commissions formed by the U.S.A., and a few archival materials and the necessary secondary sources, though very few Turkish ones. A summary of Louise Bryant’s private papers, by Howard A. Reed, may attract the attention of those who are interested in details of everyday life in Ankara and Istanbul in 1923 as seen by a woman journalist.

The mandate issue, the question of official recognition of Turkey by the U.S. administration, and the contributions of two Turkish diplomats, Ahmet Muhtar and Münir Ertegün, to American-Turkish relations are the three focuses of this book, aspects which have not so far received much scholarly attention. This book, therefore, has the potential to trigger a scholarly debate on these subjects.

Seçil Karal Akgün, who has already produced a good piece of work on the subject, entitled *General Harbord's Anatolian Trip and Report* (Istanbul, 1981), here focuses extensively on the mandate issue in two consecutive chapters entitled “Louis E. Browne and the leaders of the 1919 Sivas Congress” (chapter 1) and “The General Harbord Commission and the American mandate question” (chapter 2). Akgün explores the reasons for the U.S. inquiry into the American mandate in Turkey and shows us how the Turkish leadership of the War of Liberation, particularly at the Sivas Congress of 1919, took up the mandate issue. She rightly points out that there was a clear difference between the American and the Turkish perceptions of the term ‘mandate’: while the Turks attributed to the term “American Mandate” a special meaning which would secure U.S. assistance in escaping from being squeezed by foreign rule, the Americans, on the other hand, saw it as a protectorate that would provide the U.S. administration with leverage in their protection of the Armenians and the remaining Christians against potential Kurdish, Circassian and Turkish pressure. She shows that the reports prepared by the two commissions implied the establishment of an American Mandate covering not only the lands designated for the Armenians in eastern Anatolia but also including western Anatolia and Istanbul. That is to say that these semi-official commissions advocated the establishment of a large protectorate.
What is the framework of analysis of this book? Although each author’s framework of analysis differs from one another in details, all started off examining their subject matter within the framework of Wilsonian liberal institutionalism. While Şuhnaz Yılmaz and George S. Harris take up the mandate issue and Turkish-American diplomatic relations within the framework of Wilsonian liberal institutionalism, Seçil Karal Akgün and Nur Bilge Criss appear to be more critical than Yılmaz and Harris on this matter. None of the authors however, openly questions the motives of the U.S.’s policy towards Turkey.

This is not peculiar to the contributors of this book: international relations’ literature treats Wilson’s approach as if stemming from altruistic motives and thus based on idealism. Such an interpretation of Wilson’s approach was a hegemony produced after Wilson left office. It is true that Wilson’s proposals were not ratified by the U.S. Senate and thus the U.S.A. did not take an active role in the League of Nations. The end result does not help us to understand the causality of his proposals. In order to grasp Wilson’s overall strategy, one has to look at his 14 points as a whole. The Americans were not happy with British hegemony at a world level because it excluded the U.S. administration, due to British naval supremacy, while the secret agreements, signed in 1915 and 1916 between Britain, France, Italy and Tsarist Russia, kept the U.S. administration out of the game. Wilson’s principles were to define new rules while actually retaining the old game. As rightly noted by Akgün in her chapters, Wilson put emphasis on “open diplomacy”, free passage through international waterways, free trade, the principle of self-determination, and so forth, all these being indicators of principles of a new world order. As a growing hegemon, the U.S. administration challenged the old hegemons, British and French, and sought to lay down the rules of the U.S. hegemony for which Wilson failed to get the consent of the U.S. Senate. As indicated by Akgün, the American inquiry into an American mandate for the whole of Turkey was interpreted by the British as an indication of U.S. imperialism, an attitude that conveniently overlooked the fact that the British were themselves also imperialist.

It is true that the U.S. administration was kept out of the mandates in the Middle East (there was in the end no U.S. mandate in the region) because the British and French governments did not want the U.S. to enter the Middle East. However, since the British did not have effective access into Anatolia in 1919, there appeared to be a possible avenue for the Americans to enter the game because the U.S.A. was not considered at this point to be an imperialist power. This also explains why the Turkish leadership in the War of Liberation discussed the issue of an American mandate at the Sivas Congress in September.