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Book Review

**TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY,
1774 - 2000**

**by William Hale. London: Frank Cass, 2000, pp. 375,
bibliography, index. £35.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-7146-5071-4**

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Turkey's foreign policy is a vital aspect of its whole being. Most unfortunately it has been generally neglected by specialists of Turkish affairs in the Western world. So any work of scholarship on the subject in the English language is useful, and any work as authoritative and comprehensive as William Hale's account of the external relations of the late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey is especially so. *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000* tries to examine the diplomatic history of the country from the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca by which Russia, among other things, acquired the right of protection over Ottoman subjects of the Orthodox faith, i.e. the beginning of the so-called 'Eastern Question', until the end of the Second Millennium. This is an important book by one of the most distinguished political scientists in the field. The author, Reader in Politics with reference to Turkish affairs at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, has published several works on Turkey's political economy, its modern political development and international relations including *The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey* (London: Croom Helm, 1981) and *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Quite ambitious in its scope, the volume strives to cover more than two centuries. Hale explains in the introduction that he chose this long sweep in order to explore and identify the continuities as well as reorientations of the foreign policies of the last 150 years of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic in successive phases (pp. 1-11). However, the bulk of his narrative deals with the post-1945 era and the emphasis is on recent events —from 1991 onwards, when the Soviet Union was dissolved. The book is thematically rather than chronologically arranged and the descriptive-analytical account is divided into ten chapters of unequal length, as follows: foreign relations of the late Ottoman Empire, 1774-1918; resistance, reconstruction and diplomacy, 1918-39; Turkey and the Second World War, 1939-45; Turkey and the Cold War: the engagement phase, 1945-63; Turkey and the Cold War: global shifts and regional conflicts, 1964-90; Turkish Foreign Policy after the Cold War: strategic options and the domestic environment; Turkey and the West after the Cold War; Turkey and Regional Politics after the Cold War: (I) Greece, Cyprus, the Balkans and Transcaucasia; Turkey and Regional Politics after the Cold War: (II) Central Asia and the Middle East; conclusion and prospects. The chapters on the post-1991 period cover nearly half of the text.

The author states at the outset that his book has two principal aims, namely, 'to summarise the evolution of Turkey's external relations since the late eighteenth century and to show that the Turkish example may offer interesting pointers as to how medium-sized states have acted in the

changing international environment of the past 200 years' (p. 1). He accomplishes both tasks and more. The tome, appropriately, makes a wide survey of Turkey's foreign affairs, exhibiting in the process Turkish skill in international tightrope walking. The two chapters on Turkey and regional politics after the Cold War are very instructive and competently sum up our knowledge of the matter at hand. These chapters take us into more modern and topical territory, and with immense erudition, zest and thoroughness. The book's last chapter, however, is the most original and thought provoking. It endeavours to assess the impact of historical changes on the foreign policy options of the late Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, to outline the effects of domestic political changes on the conduct of the country's foreign policy and to offer suggestions as to what challenges Turkish foreign-policy makers seem likely to face in the first few decades of the twenty-first century. The author in every part manifests not only a command over the subject matter but also an understanding of the Turkish position. Throughout the book, Hale's fundamental sympathy for Turkey shines through.

Hale's approach is realistic and dispassionate; he eschews ideological explanations, but prefers instead to examine the strengths and weaknesses of Turkey, the stated purposes of its statesmen and the factors which have influenced them in their decisions. The author's tone is judicious and balanced, and his preference for facts over theories is commendable.

The study is based on a careful and informed reading of a broad range of printed material in English and Turkish. Amazingly, for such a work, French [with the exception of a single article by Anahide Ter Minassian, 'L'Armenie, la Turquie et le marché commun de la mer Noire', which appeared in No. 15 (1993) of *Cahiers d'Etudes sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco-Iranien* (Paris)] and German sources do not seem to have been used. Hale presents an approachable synthesis of largely English-language scholarship on the late Ottoman Empire. The opening of new material in the Ottoman archives located in Istanbul and the recent bloom of publications by scholars in the Ottoman successor states, however, make some of the author's arguments a bit dated and Euro-centric.

The Ottoman archives, including the minutes of parliamentary debates and ministerial records, would have been considerably more informative on the complex relations between the late Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers which are sketched mainly through British secondary sources such as *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: a Study in International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1966) by M.S. Andersen and *The Eastern Question: an Historical Study in European Diplomacy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 4th edition, 1940) by J.A.R. Marriott. The author did not make use of the archives of the General Staff Military History and Strategic Directorate and Presidential archives in Ankara, the proceedings of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and papers of the Republican People's Party, as well as pertinent foreign archival materials for the periods of Turkish War of Liberation, early republic and post-1945 years. As to the last decade of the twentieth century, extensive in-depth interviews with the principal actors involved in shaping Turkish foreign policies would undoubtedly have improved the quality of the inquiry.

In addition to some of these substantive questions, Hale is not right in a few of his assertions. For example, his suggestion that the Turks of the Sanjak of Alexandretta (İskenderun) made up only 38-39 percent of the total population (p. 66) is far from reflecting the truth. Official French censuses, on which these figures are based, were haphazard and incomplete. The thoroughness with which these 'censuses' was conducted varied in different sub-districts of the Sanjak. Thus it was, for

instance, impossible to observe the same degree of accuracy in the mountains as in the plains. It was impossible to apply the measure to the nomads and the semi-nomads. Moreover, a number of persons absented themselves because they suspected that the measure had some fiscal or military purpose. No dependable population statistics had ever been drawn up by the French in Syria. Even, Robert de Caix, the chief architect of the French mandatory rule in Syria, confessed that French statistics were unreliable.

In return, according to Turkish calculations of 20 October 1921, when the Ankara government handed the district to France, out of a total of around 185,000 inhabitants, Turks amounted to almost 100,000 souls and therefore enjoyed a clear majority of 55 percent. These figures were largely deduced from the last Ottoman census taken before the outbreak of the First World War, namely on 14 March 1914. Although by no means perfect, the statistics of the official Ottoman censuses are by far the most comprehensive and accurate source available concerning the population of the Empire during the last half-century of its existence. The Ottomans did develop a reasonably efficient system for counting the Empire's population after such procedures had been introduced in the United States, Britain and France and the Ottoman system was no less reliable than any other contemporary efforts of other countries in Europe.¹

Hale's claim that both the Ankara government and the local inhabitants seem to have been quite satisfied with the status quo in the Sanjak of İskenderun between 1921 and 1936 (p. 67) similarly has no validity. Despite French denials, available evidence demonstrates that the true picture was rather to the contrary. The most convincing proof in this respect comes in relation to the pro-independence movement of 1926 in the Sanjak. In fact, throughout the mandatory period the French authorities did not duly preserve the Sanjak's special administrative regime as was foreseen by the Ankara Agreement signed between Turkey and France on 20 October 1921 and governed the district as if it was an integral part of Syria. The inhabitants of the district, who were most intimately involved, were not pleased with their status within the Syrian framework and, as soon as the opportunity arose in March 1926, they did not hesitate to declare their short-lived independence.²

On the controversial question whether the deportation of Armenians in the First World War amounted to an act of genocide, Hale states: "(I)n January 1915 the Turkish forces fighting the Russians on the eastern front were devastatingly defeated at Sarıkamış, and the way opened for a large-scale Russian advance. In response, the Ottoman government ordered the deportation of the Armenian population of the region, which it rightly suspected of siding with the enemy. What happened then is strongly disputed" (p. 35). Then he goes on to express his belief in "(W)hat is indisputable is that by the end of the war, the Armenian population of Anatolia, which had numbered about 1.3 million, had been wiped out—either through flight, massacre or disease" (p. 36). Existing records suggest that relocation instead of extermination was seen as the solution. The survival of much of the Armenian population, including large numbers of deportees, can be cited against the presumption of genocide. Besides the events in eastern Anatolia in 1915 cannot be categorised as genocide as defined by the United Nations Convention of Genocide of 1948.

This very readable book is well written and lucid. It is the product of meticulous research and thoughtful erudition, without being pedantic. Detailed maps highlight each part of the volume. A handy index facilitates location of information within the book. The work also contains a note on pronunciation of Turkish words, extensive endnotes on mostly secondary sources and a select bibliography. Hale is both a first-rate writer and good scholar—once again proving that these two

abilities should always go hand-in-hand.

Another strength of the book is Hale's accuracy with dates and events. There are only a few imprecise remarks in the book which should be clarified. For instance, Henri Franklin-Bouillon was not a French Senator when the Ankara Agreement was signed (p. 51); the Turkish army did not enter Izmir on 11 but 9 September 1922 (p. 52); the Mudanya armistice was not signed on 10 October but 11 October 1922 (p. 52); invitations to a peace conference in Lausanne were not issued on 20 September but 27 October 1922 (p. 53); on 17 October 1939, it was not the President of Republic, İsmet İnönü, who telephoned the British and French ambassadors in Ankara to tell them that the talks in Moscow had broken down, and that the tripartite treaty should be concluded immediately but the Secretary-General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Numan Menemencioglu (p. 69); Menemencioglu did not become Secretary-General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1933 but 1929 (p. 80); the coalition led by Necmettin Erbakan ruled Turkey not between June 1995 and June 1996 but June 1996 and June 1997 (p. 255); it was not Turgut Sunalp who was the Chief of the Turkish General Staff in August 1964 but Cevdet Sunay (p. 185); Kamran İnan has never acted as Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs (p. 230).

It is clear that despite specific points of criticisms or feeling that some areas have been given less space than they deserve, the overwhelming verdict is one of high praise. While it does not seek to raise dramatic new theses or unveil new facts, the research makes a significant and welcome contribution to the survey of Turkish foreign policy from the last quarter of the eighteenth century until today. It must be regarded as a substantial addition to the relatively sparse literature dealing with Turkey's external relations. This is easily the best and most thorough general study of the subject which is currently available in English, and will be of interest to savants and laymen alike. This perceptive work will no doubt stimulate further consideration of its crucial theme. We are thus much indebted to Hale for this investigation. It will be among the few standards in the field until a new effort takes its place.

1 The reviewer has recently dealt with this topic more fully elsewhere. See Yücel Güçlü, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: a Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2001, in particular Chapter II, 'The Demographical Composition', pp. 22-33.

2 For more details on the subject see *ibid.*, pp. 72-83.
