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## **Turkish Decision Not Join the Second World War in June 1940 – Interpretations in Historiography and a New Light on the Issue**

### **Abstract**

After Italy declared war on Great Britain and France on June 10, 1940 Turkey remained neutral, despite the fact that the treaty with Western powers obliged it to enter the war in such circumstances. Turkish government referred to the Second Protocol attached to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance which made possible for the Turkish side to ignore their obligations in case a threat of armed conflict with Soviet Union. However it is still not known if this was real reason for Turkish decision. The aim of this article is to review interpretations of Turkish attitude that have been present in historiography since the war. It includes short-term and long-term factors of Turkish decision from June 1940. In addition, attention was concentrated on British intelligence sources, which, in relation to the period between spring and summer of 1940, have not yet been taken into account by scholars when trying to determinate Turkish motives.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Second World War, Turkish neutrality, historiography on Turkish foreign policy



On 19 October 1939 treaty of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France and Turkey was signed. On basis of article 1 it guaranteed Turkey British and French political and military assistance in case of any aggression. On the other hand Turkish obligation were strictly specified. According to article 2 Turkey was to provide all aid in assistance in her power in the “event of act of aggression by a European Power leading to war in the Mediterranean area in which France and United Kingdom were involved.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover under article 3 Turkey was obligated to help her allies in case they were engaged into hostilities due to their guarantees given to Greece and Romania.

The war reached the Mediterranean on 10 June 1940, when Italy declared it on Great Britain and France. Next day Italian air forces bombed Malta, Port Sudan and Aden. Thus, the conditions for Turkish entry to war were met. However Turkey did not fulfil its obligations due to the fact that it felt threatened by being embroiled in a armed conflict with the Soviet Union. Therefore, a reference was made to the Second Protocol attached to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, which made it possible for the Turkish side to ignore their obligations under such circumstances.

Real motives behind this decision are still unknown. It is a result of the fact that Turkish documents from this period of time were unavailable for many years. Nowadays access to them is very limited. There is no possibility of free research especially in comparison to archives of western states. As a result scholars were forced to use other sources. All conclusions have been drawn on the basis of British, German, American documents, and to a lesser extent, French, Italian and Russian ones. The sources have been supplemented by diaries, of contestable quality, and Turkish press reports. The collection is a vast reservoir of knowledge about the Turkish foreign policy, but makes it impossible to form unequivocal judgements. As a consequence, various interpretations of the decision of the Turkish authorities have arisen. The purpose of this article is to review them and draw attention to some sources available since 1990s, which not have been used so far.

The article is divided into four parts. The first one briefly describes diplomatic events between June 11 and June 14. It is an attempt to gain insight into what is known about decision making process in Turkey during this short period of time. The second focuses on British officials' attempts to ascertain the reason of Turkish decision. This is important not only because of the close relationships between Britain and Turkey during this period, but above all due to the fact that British assessments have had a major impact on historiography. Third part is the main subject of the article. It concentrates on the conclusions of the scholars who tried to interpret the Turkish decision. In last part two Turkish diplomatic messages that were intercepted by British intelligence are analysed. None of them is from June. The first one is dated on the end of May 1940 and second the beginning of July 1940. However, these are the only known Turkish diplomatic documents from this period, the content of which may provide insight into the reason of Turkish decision from June 1940.

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<sup>1</sup> FO 371/23748/R8427/661/67, p. 82. English translation of the French Text of Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty.

## British Demands and Turkish Reaction in June 1940

Day after Italy declared war on Allies, British ambassador Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen and French ambassador Rene Massigli met with Numan Menemencioğlu, Secretary of State in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of Minister of Foreign Affairs Şükrü Saracoğlu, unavailable at that time. They made a request to provide immediate assistance for Allied powers and declare war on Italy.<sup>2</sup> Having listened to both diplomats, Menemencioğlu merely informed that he would convey all demands to the prime minister right away.<sup>3</sup> In the evening the same day, Saracoğlu met with diplomats to inform them that the decision about Turkish reaction to Italy joining the war would most probably be made the following day, because the prime minister and the government were waiting for President İsmet İnönü to come back from Istanbul. At the end of conversation, he added that during the last meeting with the ambassador of the Soviet Union it was said that if Italy joined the war, Turkey would announce mobilisation.<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime, in London, Foreign Secretary Viscount Halifax tried to understand what the Turkish position was by talking to the Turkish ambassador Rüşü Aras. The Turkish diplomat claimed that he had not received any instructions from Ankara, but at the same time, he conveyed some information that shed light on the issue. He believed that the first step to be expected was the revocation of the Turkish ambassador from Italy. Next, the Turkish government was supposed to conduct consultations with Balkan states. Moreover, the Turkish ambassador saw it necessary to consult with the Soviet Union. Generally speaking, Aras hoped that the Turkish government would act reasonably and underlined that undertaking any actions solely by Turkey would not produce discernible effect.<sup>5</sup>

Both reports from Ankara, and the conversation with Aras had shown that the Turkish government would try to delay the decision. This tactic was also referred to by Viscount Halifax during the War Cabinet meeting on 11 June.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the next day Knatchbull-Hugessen sent a dispatch informing that the meeting of the Turkish government was still ongoing and that there would be no news before 13 June.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Viscount Halifax, when asked in the afternoon meeting of the War Cabinet about news from Ankara, could only report the most important parts of the conversation with the Turkish ambassador from the day before.<sup>8</sup> On 13 June, the government did not receive any news either.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> FO 371/25015/ R 6510/316/44, p. 260. No 521, Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to FO, 11.06.1940.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 261. No 526, Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to FO, Ankara, 11.06.1940.

<sup>5</sup> FO 424/284, p. 30. No 32, Viscount Halifax to Sir. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, 11.06.1940.

<sup>6</sup> FO 371/25016/ R 6538/316/44, p. 8. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions, 11.06.1940.

<sup>7</sup> FO 371/25015/ R 6510/316/44, p. 262. No 534, Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to FO, Ankara, 12.06.1940.

<sup>8</sup> CAB 65/7, p. 440. W.M. (40) 163, Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, June 12, 1940, at 5 p.m.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 446. W.M. (40) 164, Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Thursday, June 13, 1940, at 12 noon.

The Turkish government sent its reply to London the same day, but at night, so members of the War Cabinet could only see it on 14 June 1940.<sup>10</sup>

The Turkish government rejected Allies' demands and decided not to join the war against Italy. The justification was that implementing Article 2 of the Treaty on Mutual Assistance of October 1939 would drag Turkey into a military conflict with the Soviet Union. In exchange, Ankara proposed issuing a declaration stating that "the Government of the Turkish Republic had decided in agreement with the Allied Governments to adopt the attitude of non-belligerency".<sup>11</sup>

### **British Seeks Motives of Turkish Decision**

Since announced decision made by Turkish government has become an object of interpretation and speculation. First, it was believed in London that Ankara was indeed afraid of the reaction of the Soviet Union. This conclusion was drawn from the information provided by Knatchbull-Hugessen. The British ambassador wrote that Ankara was convinced of a threat from the Soviet Union although it did not receive any official *démarche*. This conviction arose after the Turkish ambassador talked in Moscow with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, on 4 June 1940. According to the information that Knatchbull-Hugessen received via Saracoğlu, when Molotov found out that in the case of Italy joining the war, Turkey would declare general mobilisation, he supposedly reacted not only unfavourably, but even menacingly. Knatchbull-Hugessen did not believe that this was the only premise that the Turkish government relied on. He believed that either it was a pretext or once Italy joined the war, Berlin and Moscow began to exert pressure on Ankara and the latter one did not want to admit to it.<sup>12</sup>

The FO believed this motivation was very probable.<sup>13</sup> During the meeting of War Cabinet on 13 June, deputy under-secretary of state Orme Sargent did not exclude the Soviet-Italian cooperation that would result in capturing the Turkish Straits if Turkey joined the war. During the meeting next day, Viscount Halifax said that the Soviet Union, under German and Italian pressure, bullied Turkey to make it invoke the Second Protocol to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. At the same time, another reason for Turkey's decision was supposed to be poor military situation of the Allies on the Western Front.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 463. W.M. (40) 166, Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, June 14, 1940, at 12:30 p.m.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> FO 195/2462, GB-Turkey: Political Relations, pp. 20–24. No 544, Sir. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to FO, Angora, 13.06.1940, No 541, Sir. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to FO, Angora, 13.06.1940.

<sup>13</sup> CAB 65/7, p. 447. W.M. (40) 164, Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Thursday, June 13, 1940, at 12 noon. CAB 65/7/61, p. 463. W.M. (40) 166, Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, June 14, 1940, at 12:30 p.m.

<sup>14</sup> See *Ibidem*. FO 195/2462, GB-Turkey: Political Relations, pp. 6–7. Telegram from Foreign Office, 15.06.1940.

Soon, however, suspicions arose that referring to the threat from the Soviet Union was but a pretext for the Turkish government.<sup>15</sup> Knatchbull-Hugessen was the first one to notice that. In a telegram of 14 June, he wrote that in his opinion, the real motives behind Turkey's decision were: first, unfavourable military situation of the Allies, second, disappointing results of the staff consultations from Haifa, and third, the fact that western powers had lost the capability to military support Turkey.<sup>16</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, the first factor was considered to be the key one. "We made our approach to the Turks at the moment when France was on a verge of complete collapse. We were ignorant of the full significance and indeed, of the full gravity of the situation in the West. M. Saracoğlu was not" – wrote a British diplomat in his memoirs.<sup>17</sup> Other reasons were named as well. They were not of primary importance, but made it easier for the Turkish government to make the decision. The first was the collapse of cooperation of the Balkan states during the "Phoney War", coupled with the possibility that the Third Reich would act quickly, that is regroup their forces from the West and, with the help from Italy, concentrate on conquering South-Eastern Europe. The second, was Turkish unpreparedness to participate in a war. He blamed London for that: "our supplies of military equipment were still behind either Turkish needs or Turkish expectations".<sup>18</sup> It is worth to mention that German ambassador in Turkey during WWII, Franz von Papen, mentioned the same in his memoirs.<sup>19</sup>

### **Historiography and Short-Term and Long-Term Determinants of Turkish Decision**

The arguments presented by the British ambassador can often be found in historical studies on the Turkish policy during WWII. The most extreme example was an uncritical quote in the book by John Robertson.<sup>20</sup> Generally, however, only one argument was cited, that is the critical military situation of the Allies on the Western Front. Already Edward Vere-Hodge, in his book written five years after the end of WWII, using the only source available to him, that is the Turkish press, noticed that in June 1940, the Turkish public

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<sup>15</sup> In the document with FO's opinion prepared for COS, Philip Nichols wrote that the danger from the Soviet Union was used by the Turkish side only as a pretext to invoke the Second Protocol, and the real reason for not joining the war was Allies' military weakness. FO 371/25016/R 6574/316/44, p. 30. P. Nichols to Lieutenant-Colonel L.C. Hollis, 22.06.1940. An almost identical view was presented by R. Bowker, another FO employee. FO 371/25016/R 6608/316/44, p. 51. The Effect of France's Withdrawal on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance with Turkey, Minute by R. Bowker, 19.06.1940.

<sup>16</sup> FO 195/2462, GB-Turkey: Political Relations, p. 17. No 548, Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax, Angora, 14.06.1940.

<sup>17</sup> Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Diplomat in Peace and War*, London 1949, p. 166.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Franz von Papen, *Memoirs*, London 1952, p. 461.

<sup>20</sup> John Robertson, *Turkey and Allied Strategy 1941–1945*, New York 1986, pp. 18–19.

opinion was convinced that the Allies had lost the war.<sup>21</sup> Ferenc A. Váli, a Hungarian political scientist, claimed that France's fall was the most important argument for the Turkish government not to join the war.<sup>22</sup> Selim Deringil followed this thought. First, he underlined that France's military catastrophe in late spring 1940 came as a shock to Turkey. He believed that the Turkish side considered the French army to be the best one in Europe. This assumption was based on İsmet İnönü assessment, that the war would last four to five years and during this time the Germans would not manage to cross the Maginot Line.<sup>23</sup> It is worth to mention that Christian Leitz also referred to this opinion of Turkish president.<sup>24</sup> According to Deringil when reality turned out to be completely different, it fuelled fear that yet again Turkey joined the weaker side of the conflict, like during the Great War. Additionally, it was argued that it would be peculiar for the Turkish government to join the war given that one of its allies had withdrawn from it. By the way, another scholar, Frank Weber, also noticed that.<sup>25</sup> The view is shared by Türkkaya Ataöv, who wrote about the press of that time and noticed that France's collapse entailed loss of possible support for Turkey in the form of French army in Syria and Lebanon.<sup>26</sup> Second, Deringil noticed that the demand for Turkey to join the war was made by the Allies when their failure on the Western Front was at least very probable, which might have created distrust on the side of Turkish decision makers in terms of the intentions of western states.<sup>27</sup> Murat Hakki drew attention to the same motive, citing rumours that France, by drawing Turkey into the war, wanted to negotiate better terms of armistice with Germany.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, referring to the opinion of a few deputies of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, he emphasized that the fear of joining the side that would lose the war again could also have played the role.<sup>29</sup>

Contrary to what Knatchbull-Hugessen wrote, scholars did not reject the thesis of the Soviet threat completely. True, most of them present it merely as the official explanation provided by the Turkish government.<sup>30</sup> But, for example, Metin Tamkoç believed that the fear of the conflict with the Soviet Union was one of actual reasons for Turkey not to join the war.<sup>31</sup> Ataöv had a similar assessment of the situation. He

<sup>21</sup> Edward Vere-Hodge, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1918–1948*, Ambilly-Annemasse 1950, p. 134.

<sup>22</sup> Ferenc Váli, *Bridge across the Bosphorus. The Foreign Policy of Turkey*, London 1971, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: an Active Neutrality*, Cambridge 2004, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> Christian Leitz, *Nazi Germany and Neutral Europe during the Second World War*, Manchester 2000, p. 89.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Weber, *The Evasive Neutral. Germany, Britain and the Quest for a Turkish Alliance in the Second World War*, Columbia 1979, p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Türkkaya Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1939–1945*, Ankara 1965, p. 74.

<sup>27</sup> Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p. 99.

<sup>28</sup> Murat Hakki, 'Surviving the Pressure of the Superpowers: an Analysis of Turkish Neutrality during the Second World War', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 2 (2005–2006), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 103. F. Váli, *Bridge across the Bosphorus*, p. 30. F. Weber, *The Evasive Neutral*, p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> Metin Tamkoç, *The Warrior Diplomats. Guardians of the National Security and Modernization of Turkey*, Salt Lake City 1976, p. 205.



noticed that the Turkish government did not receive any guarantees as to the neutrality of the Soviet Union and underlined that the Soviet aggression on Poland in September 1939 had an impact on the government in Ankara.<sup>32</sup> Christopher Catherwood stressed the importance of the factor as well and even claimed that it was more important than France's military collapse.<sup>33</sup> It was, however, Nicholas Tamkin, who went the furthest, and at the end of the introduction to his book, he quoted Knatchbull-Hugessen on the topic of the Turkish decision not to join the war „Russia [holds] the key to Turkish foreign policy”.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, he clearly indicated that in his opinion the Soviet threat was not only unfairly marginalised, but might actually be the most important reason behind the decision of the Turkish government of June 1940. Doubts about this issue could be dispelled by research made recently by Onur Işçi. His study on Turkish-Soviet relations was promising, because it was based, inter alia, on documents from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister's Office.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the author did not write a word about Turkish decision of June 1940. This fact, which is difficult to understand, results from a very serious mistake. Namely in one of the chapters where the tripartite treaty of mutual assistance was analyzed, he claimed: “Turkey would be actively involved only if it were attacked; if its allies were attacked, they simply promised benevolent neutrality”.<sup>36</sup> This sentence proves that the author did not know the full content of the treaty, because the second and the third articles explicitly set out the conditions under which Turkey was to lend aid and assistance to its allies.

Apart from the reasons that had a direct impact on the decision of June 1940, long-term factors are also discussed, that is the fundamental principles of the Turkish foreign policy. Two approaches have been developed. The first one is mainly presented by scholars of Turkish origin. They believe it was a priority for the Turkish government to remain neutral during WWII. In short, the Turkish side remembered the failures of the WWI and were ready to fight only if attacked. Such views were presented among others by Tamkoç, Zehra Önder and Faruk Loğoğlu<sup>37</sup>, but it was Deringil who developed the concept, which he named, after the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs 1942–1944, Numan Menemenciğlu, “active neutrality”. Given its economic and military weakness, as well as the already mentioned experience from the previous world conflict, the Turkish *raison d'être* required for the country not to engage in a new war. In the light of the above, Ankara, on the one hand, allied itself with the Western in order to have allies

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<sup>32</sup> Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Catherwood, *The Balkans in World War Two. Britain's Balkan Dilemma*, New York 2003, p. 125.

<sup>34</sup> Nicolas Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey and Soviet Union, 1940–1945. Strategy, Diplomacy and Intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Cambridge 2009, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Onur Işçi, *Turkey and the Soviet Union during World War II. Diplomacy, Discord and International Relations*, London 2019, p. 241.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68.

<sup>37</sup> Tamkoç, *The Warrior Diplomats*, p. 205. Zehra Önder, *Die türkische Aussenpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München 1977, p. 59. Faruk Loğoğlu, *İsmet İnönü and the Making of Modern Turkey*, Ankara 1998, p. 74.

against the designs of aggressive powers, and on other hand, tried to make anything it could to avoid a direct confrontation with potential enemies. Deringil commented on the decision of the Turkish government to invoke the Second Protocol in the following way: “Turkish decision-makers thus used two absolutely contradictory to further a consistent aim. In October 1939, the felt in danger and by stressing the obligation to help Britain and France (...) insured themselves with them. In June 1940, the Allies were in danger yet the Turks managed to avoid commitment (...) justified their actions by the same treaty (Protocol 2) and emphasized that by staying out they were avoiding placing additional burdens on the Allies. In two contradictory situations the result was the same, Turkey was preserved”.<sup>38</sup> Deringil became very influential among other scholars. Echoes of his studies can be found in articles of Murat Hakki, Davut Han Aslan and Buğra Selçük.<sup>39</sup> Recently published findings of Murat Önsoy and Gürol Baba go in the same direction. They believe that Kemalist elites strived for Turkey to remain neutral from the very beginning of the war.<sup>40</sup>

The second approach was developed by Anglo-Saxon historians. The details vary significantly, but there is a common denominator. Namely that Turkey was ready to join the war, but the necessary conditions were not met. According to Frank Weber, the Turkish government was ready to engage itself not only on the side of the Allies, but also the Axis camp. This readiness depended on the military situation on the fronts, and on territorial benefits which Turkey could reap from joining directly one side of the conflict. This is why one of the reasons of Turkey’s decision not to join the war in June 1940 is considered to be France’s and then Great Britain’s withdrawal of planned support for the Turkish army, which was supposed to capture the Dodecanese islands. This was tantamount to calling the operation off and cancelling the occupation of the archipelago by the Turkish side.<sup>41</sup> Brock Millman has a completely different view of the problem of possible engagement. He believes that Turkey could only have chosen the Allies and it did not do so, because of the errors committed by the British government. First, he claims that the Turkish alliance with western powers could not have been implemented because of opportunism of the British foreign policy. He says that Turkey did not have a constant part of the British strategy and its role depended on various political scenarios. Generally speaking, the Turkish state was an important ally in case of war with Italy, an averagely important partner in the conflict with Germany and completely unimportant in case of possible confrontation with the Soviet Union. The fact that Turkey was treated that way made it impossible to work out a coherent political line that would make it possible for Great Britain to bind Ankara. Second, he believed that the responsibility for Turkey remaining out of the war boils down to the Allies’ incapability to give the state

<sup>38</sup> Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> Hakki, *Surviving the Pressure*, s. 9–11, 21. Davut H. Aslan, Buğra Selçük, ‘Reflections of the Second World War on Turkey’s Foreign Policy’, *Kwartalnik Naukowy Uczelni Vistula*, 39 (2014), pp. 147–148.

<sup>40</sup> Murat Önsoy, Gürol Baba, ‘Escaping the Whirlpool of War: a Two-fold Analysis of Turkey’s Neutrality Policy in World War II’, *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 29 (2019), pp. 125, 127–132.

<sup>41</sup> Weber, *The Evasive Neutral*, p. 51.



the necessary support. To some extent, Millman invokes Knatchbull-Hugessen's argument, but it is not only about military equipment supplies, but about broadly understood military assistance and economic support.<sup>42</sup>

### British Intelligence Documents and Turkish Decision

British intelligence sources give a limited insight into Turkish documents. These are mainly diplomatic dispatches captured and deciphered by the Government Code and Cipher School in Bletchley Park. Those diplomatic decrypts have already been used by two British scholars: Robert Denniston and Nicolas Tamkin.<sup>43</sup> However their studies concentrated on other issues than Turkish decision from June 1940. Therefore they did not pay attention to SIGINT sources from the late spring and early summer of 1940. Yet, Among them are two documents that are directly related to the issue

The first one contains report of the Turkish ambassador in Moscow from the end of May 1940, which was then forwarded to the diplomatic post in Great Britain. The diplomatic representative commented on the onset of British-Soviet trade talks and compared the situation with the one from summer 1939. He believed that the Kremlin came back to the proven tactics of taking advantage of circumstances to subjugate Romania and next Turkey.<sup>44</sup> In the second dispatch sent to ambassador in Moscow at the beginning of July, Saracoğlu explained Ankara's political line towards its northern neighbour: maintain complete neutrality in the face of disputes and conflicts between the Soviet Union and the countries participating in the war. Under no circumstances did Turkey want to attack the country, neither did it want to become a tool used by other powers to do it. Therefore, the minister for foreign affairs said that this factor was instrumental in invoking the Second Protocol once Italy joined the war. Ankara did not want to be forced to help the Allies exert pressure on Moscow, by threatening with an air operation or using the position as the guardian of the Turkish Straits.<sup>45</sup>

In the light of the documents, it can be concluded that indeed the main reason for the Turkish authorities not to meet the treaty obligations towards western powers was the willingness to maintain peaceful relations with the Soviet Union. However, the source needs to be treated carefully, given its selective nature. Both documents are but a fraction of diplomatic correspondence between Ankara and its offices around the world. It was not possible to seize, decipher and translate each dispatch. Additionally, this material does not give any insight into the decision-making process in the Turkish capital. It merely

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<sup>42</sup> Brock Millman, *Turkish The ill-made Alliance: Anglo-Turkish Relations 1934–1940*, Montreal 1998, pp. 374–376.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Denniston, *Churchill's Secret War. Diplomatic Decrypts, the Foreign Office and Turkey 1942–1944*, London 2000, p. 208. N. Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey and Soviet Union*, p. 267.

<sup>44</sup> Government Code and Cypher School: Diplomatic Section (further: HW) 12/253. No 081123, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Angora to Turkish Ambassador, London, 30.05.1940.

<sup>45</sup> HW 12/254. No 081939, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Angora to Turkish Ambassador, London, 7.07.1940.

shows the already made decisions and premises that might have impacted them. It needs to be underlined that the first document, where the threat from the Soviet Union was evoked explicitly, contains just an opinion of the ambassador in Moscow. It remains unknown what impact it had on Turkish authorities. Did they consider it alarming, ignored it or considered as hysterical? Saracoğlu conveyed it without any comment. It is true that the mere fact that the Turkish embassy in Great Britain received it might indicate that its content was considered interesting, but the reasons behind it remain unknown. The second dispatch seems to be much more significant. It can be assumed that we are dealing with the position of the Turkish government, or at least the minister of foreign affairs of the country. There is, however, no mention of a threat from the neighbour in the North. It stresses the willingness to maintain peaceful relations. The context seems to be important. The message was sent when the crisis in Soviet-Turkish relations was deepening, due to the Germans publishing French documents about the plans to attack the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, its content can be treated as Saracoğlu's opinion or the opinion of Turkish authorities more generally. It can be considered as instructions for the ambassador in Moscow, the aim of which was to calm down the situation by oral assurances to the Soviet side that the Turkish position was a peaceful one. To sum it up, the documents are undoubtedly a valuable indication, but it cannot be said with full certainty that the decisive factor impacting Turkey's neutrality was fear of the Soviet threat.

## Conclusions

British-Turkish diplomatic relations between June 10 and 14, 1940 make it impossible to draw far-reaching conclusions about the Turkish decision-making process. It can only be said that final decision not to join the war was made on June 13 and that the presence of Turkish president was necessary. One could relate that fact with claims of some scholars that İnönü was in charge of Turkish foreign policy and had the final word in this sphere of competence<sup>47</sup>. However information passed by Saracoğlu to Knatchbull-Hugessen and Aras to lord Halifax could also be an evidence that decision was made earlier and on June 13 it was only confirmed. Until the minutes of Turkish government's meetings are made available, it will not be possible to establish facts.

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<sup>46</sup> On 4 July, the German press agency DNB (Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro) disclosed excerpts of documents from seized French archives. There were dispatches of the French ambassador in Turkey Rene Massigli, including the one about the conversation with Saracoğlu on the violation of the Turkish airspace, a telegram of the French ambassador in Moscow to the Turkish counterpart on the Russian-American talks about methods of extinguishing oil, instructions for Air Commodore Mitchel about prepared attacks on Baku and Batumi, as well as an order to start talks with the Turkish side about making aerodromes in Eastern Anatolia available, and finally the message of the commander in chief of the French army General Maurice Gamelin to the commander of the Army of the Levant, Maxime Weygand, on possible military actions in the Balkans. P. Osborn, *Brytyjskie plany ataku na ZSRR 1939–1941*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 229–230.

<sup>47</sup> Loğoğlu, *İsmet İnönü*, 73–74. Tamkoç, *The Warrior Diplomats*, pp. 32–33. Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943–1945. Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, New Jersey 1973, pp. 33–36.

At first, British thought that the most likely motive for the Turkish position was actually fear of the Soviet Union. However, arguments related to the situation in the Western Front and the limited possibilities of military support for Turkey followed soon.

In historiography these three factors are also the most frequently used explanations for the Turkish decision. Scholars tried to find evidence to confirm them or find arguments that would justify them. However there is a visible division between those who attach more importance to the military weakness of France and Great Britain and those who consider fear of Soviet Union as decisive factor.

In the case of long-term conditions, two approaches have also been distinguished. The first one focus on the hypothesis that the main aim of Turkish policy during Second World War was to remain neutral. Those who support the second one claims, that Turkey was eager to involve in conflict, but in specific circumstances that did not occur.

British intelligence sources shed new light on the issue of Turkey's non-entry to war. Based on them, it may be concluded that the fear of the Soviet Union was an important motive. Still they offer limited explanatory value and no define conclusion can be drawn from them.

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