

Activities - The Making of Modern Turkey Seminars 2006-2007

Third Saturday of each month from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Presented in association with Bogazici University

Turkey and the World in the Interim between the Two World Wars

October 14, 2006 - Prof. Zafer Toprak

Turkey and the Balkans during the Interim between the Two World Wars

Developments in the Balkans, and more specifically the Balkan Wars, played a key role in the emergence, in the 20th century, of the interwar period known as the "Dark Age," which, in turn, led to the building of a new nation state in Ottoman Turkey. The fall of the Ottoman Empire was closely linked to these events in the Balkans. Despite unfavorable conditions, in the wake of the War of Independence and during the interim years, the Balkans held a unique significance for Turkey and became the backbone of its foreign policy. While Turkey sought security in the Balkans and respected the Balkan Pact, developments in the internal politics of these countries also had an indirect impact on the Turkish political regime. Nonetheless, compared to the Balkans, Turkey experienced much more stable internal and external politics.

November 18, 2006 - Assoc. Prof. Dilek Barlas

Turkey and Italy during the Interim between the Two World Wars

Turco-Italian relations from the establishment of the Turkish Republic to the outbreak of World War II can best be described as having had their "ups and downs." A year before the Republic was proclaimed in Turkey, Mussolini came to power in Italy and the policies he adopted toward the Balkan states were anything but friendly. Until 1926, Italy considered Turkey a country on the brink of collapse. From 1928 on however, Rome realized that the Turkish Republic would not fall apart so easily. Subsequent developments in the Mediterranean and the Balkans improved Turkey's image in Italy and Rome began to see Turkey not only as Anatolia but as a part of the Balkans as well. Nonetheless, this new disposition toward Turkey was short-lived and after 1932, Italy reverted to its earlier hostile outlook. On the other hand, although all through the 1920s and 1930s, Turkey always perceived Italy as a threat, it never renounced its attempts at collaboration with that country. Both Turkey's economic needs and its attempts to escape economic isolation in the international sphere forced it to search for different options.

December 16, 2006 - Assist. Prof. Elgin Macar

Turkey and Greece during the Interim between the Two World Wars

The Turkish nationalist offensive in August/September 1922 resulted in a dramatic rout of the Greek armies in Asia Minor. Tens of thousands of Greeks fled to the kingdom. This influx of over a million refugees strongly tested the country's economy. Both these internal difficulties and the Italian threat prompted Venizelos toward a rapprochement with Turkey, which culminated in the Balkan Pact. The polarization in the political arena between the Venizelists and the Royalists led to the military's politicization and assisted General Metaxas' rise to power, ending political turmoil only by imposing a military dictatorship.

January 20, 2007 - Assoc. Prof. Cemil Kocak

Turkey and Germany in the Interwar Period

This seminar focuses on an important period in Turco-German relations, beginning with the foundation of the Republic until the end of World War II. Based on his two books on this topic, (*Türk-Alman İlişkileri 1923-1939* and *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Donemi 1938-1945*), Cemil Kocak examines Turkey's international relations in terms of its foreign policy in general, and more specifically, with respect to its bilateral relations with Germany, which played a determining role in that policy. Relations with Germany should essentially be considered in two periods: the first relatively less significant period encompasses the relations established between Republican Turkey and Weimar Germany. The second period covers the many-sided relations with Nazi Germany, which carry more import in terms of international relations and Turkish foreign policy. The economic, cultural and military aspects of all these developments will be considered in addition to diplomatic relations.

February 17, 2007 - Cagri Erhan

Turkey and the Middle East in the Interwar Period

Although the interwar period was essentially a time of tensions interspersed with rare moments of reconciliation between the status quo powers that sought to perpetuate the new European balance of power established by the Treaty of Versailles and the revisionists who challenged that order, there were also states that attempted to remain outside of this polarization. Well aware that taking sides carried with it the risk of sustaining damages in an eventual conflict, the newly established Turkish Republic avoided any moves that might lead to such an eventuality. As the revisionist and expansionist discourses of Italy and Germany began to escalate in the 1930s, this in turn caused a rapprochement between the states that felt themselves under threat. Even if this rapprochement emerged mainly as a form of political entente between Balkan states, it cannot be ignored that there were also, at this time, attempts to create a similar collaboration between Turkey and certain Middle Eastern countries. The Saadabad Pact, a non-aggression and regional security agreement between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan came about in such a context.

The atmosphere at this time was conducive to an agreement between these countries since the 1926 Ankara Agreement had settled the question of Mosul with Iraq under the mandate of Great Britain, and the Shah of Iran aspired to reforms in his own country emulating those of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. This period also marked an improvement in Turkey's commercial and economic ties with Palestine under British mandate.

Within the framework outlined above, this presentation will examine the relationship between Turkey and the Middle East, which was shaped by the internal dynamics of regional countries and fundamentally determined the inter-war period.

March 17, 2007 - Melek Firat

Turkey and France in the Interwar Period

Relations between Turkey and France in the interwar period should be considered in two subperiods. During the first, which lasted until 1928, the new Republic attempted to deal both with internal economic and political difficulties and find a solution to topics left unresolved by the Treaty of Lausanne. Three issues were high on Turkey's foreign policy agenda: the Mosul question with Great Britain, the forced exchange of populations with Greece, and debts owed to France. In the 1930s, the resolution of these issues and the impact of the Great Depression of 1929 prompted Turkey to speed up efforts to develop political and economic relations with the West, in line with its goal of increasing its integration with the West and attaining a higher level of development. The Hatay problem with France that emerged at this time was the main obstacle in attaining these objectives. Two factors made it easier to put pressure on France and settle the problem in Turkey's favor: the instability that the economic depression of 1929 had produced in France, and, in particular, the fact that Great Britain, face to what was occurring in Germany, had begun to seek an alliance with Turkey. It will be meaningful to reevaluate the established idea that Turkey had a "status quo" foreign policy in the interwar period, in light of France and Turkey's domestic and foreign policies at that time, and Turco- French relations within the general international conjuncture."

April 21, 2007 - Prof. Zafer Toprak

Turkey and America in the InterwarPeriod

Relations between Turkey and America in the inter war period went through a transition phase. As part of the Ottoman Empire, the Near East had possessed cultural relevance for the White House and for American public opinion in general. This part of the world held both ethnic and religious significance for America who became influential in the Near East through its educational institutions. However, Turkey's aspirations to "total independence" in the interwar period clashed with America's cultural, ethnic and religious expectations. The US was not in favor of the Treaty of Lausanne and for a long time, entertained somewhat cool relations with Turkey. A number of American educational and charity organizations had to shut down at this time. In addition, the Armenian question, though not as salient as it is today, still lingered somewhere in the back of collective consciousness. When after World War II the Near East became the Middle East, the region acquired still greater strategic and economic meaning. With the onset of the Cold War, Turkey joined the ranks of western countries and adopted a more realistic approach toward its relationship with the US.

May 26, 2007 - Prof. Mete Tungay

Turkey and Russia in the Interwar Period

During the interwar period, Soviet Russia put its goal of "world revolution" aside and adopted instead that of "socialism in one country." All through this period, Turkey, who had benefited from Soviet assistance in its War of Independence, constantly collaborated with the USSR in the area of foreign policy, although it also attempted to improve its relations with the West. However, at the start of inonu's "National Leader" regime, as a precaution in the face of impending war, Turkey signed treaties of mutual assistance with Britain and France, which provoked a rift in its relations with the Soviet Union.