

The Diary of Ambassador  
Joseph Grew and the  
Groundwork for the US-  
Turkey Relationship

“Mr. Ornarlı’s masterful presentation befits Ambassador Grew’s vivid original writing. *The Diary of Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Groundwork for the US-Turkey Relationship*, refreshes the availability of this master American diplomatist’s insightful and far-sighted observations at today’s critical moment of profound change within Turkey and in her relations with the world. It is thus essential reading for Americans and others seeking to communicate and interact with this pivotally important country to mutual benefit, as Grew did so ably while collaborating with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, to build the foundations of modern American-Turkish relations.”

**Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone**

**Former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey**

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“Insightful and timely, *The Diary of Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Groundwork for the US-Turkey Relationship* provides a firsthand account of fledgling relations between Turkey and the United States, as told through the experiences of America’s first ambassador to Turkey. In writing this book, Mr. Ornarlı shed new light on a vitally important period in Turkey’s history through the eyes of a great diplomat. Observers of Turkey-U.S. relations will find this book fascinating for both its historical significance as well as its broader implications for diplomacy today.”

**Ambassador Namık Tan**

**Former Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the U.S.**

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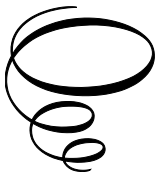
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# The Diary of Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Groundwork for the US- Turkey Relationship

By

Bariş Ornarlı

**Cambridge**  
**Scholars**  
Publishing



The Diary of Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Groundwork for the US-Turkey Relationship

By Barış Ornarlı

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-7830-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-7830-2

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*To my mother and father, to whom I owe everything*



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## PREFACE

*The New York Times* described him as “a patrician diplomat of the old school.”<sup>1</sup> Ambassador Joseph C. Grew was a seminal figure, prominent in the establishment and rise of the American Foreign Service. He was one of the first professionals to make a full career in diplomacy, during a particularly tumultuous time in the history of the United States, between the administrations of President Theodore Roosevelt and President Harry Truman. Grew attended two major international conferences, Versailles and Lausanne; was appointed ambassador twice, in Ankara and Tokyo; and twice served as Undersecretary of State.<sup>2</sup> He was regarded as one of the most experienced American diplomats of his time.

He also committed to keeping a diary, beginning in St. Petersburg where he was Third Secretary. During his 41 years in the Foreign Service, Ambassador Grew produced 168 bound volumes, 39 of which contained his diaries, each volume of diary around 1000 typewritten pages.<sup>3</sup> The papers recorded his experiences, observations, speeches, dispatches, letters, and news clippings. Grew argued that history would be built on contemporary comment and that he had an obligation to the accurate recording of history.

In 1952, Ambassador Grew’s diaries were published as two volumes, edited by Professor Walter Johnson, who was Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Chicago. *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years* remains the most complete publication of the Grew diaries encompassing his entire career.<sup>4</sup> It is “the record of one lifetime, spent in the Foreign Service of the United States,” Grew wrote.<sup>5</sup>

Part Four in Volume II of *Turbulent Era*, entitled *The New Turkey*, covered Ambassador Grew’s mission to Turkey from August 1, 1927, to March 12, 1932. It is 210 pages in total. Several dates were omitted in the volume, at the discretion of Professor Johnson and Ambassador Grew. I became curious when I noticed the diary published in *Turbulent Era* skipped from October 15 to October 22, 1927. This was peculiar to me because on those days, Gazi Mustafa Kemal delivered his epic speech, known as *Nutuk*, at the Second Congress of the Republican People’s Party (CHP) in Ankara. The diplomatic corps and the foreign press were in attendance. The reading took six days and recounted the history of the War of Independence from the perspective of its venerable leader. Apparently, Grew did not stay in Ankara for the entirety of the speech and returned to Istanbul to continue

settling in, having just arrived *en poste*. But this led to a question: Could there be other entries excluded from an abridged diary that warranted a second look?

Although only 210 pages on Turkey appeared in *Turbulent Era*, Ambassador Grew's meticulously typed diary from his time in Turkey is 2,973 pages. It contains his views on the Turkish Revolution, of which he wrote, "a tremendous program that excites the admiration of the world."<sup>6</sup> He analyzed domestic political developments and reported early attempts to introduce multi-party democracy in Turkey. He wrote about the leaders of this new republic, his personal impressions of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa, later known as Atatürk, the founding President of Turkey; Premier İsmet (İnönü) Paşa; Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü (Aras); and other top officials of republican Turkey. The diary details the establishment of the bilateral relationship prior to the Cold War, and it illustrates the effects of thoughtful and earnest diplomacy. The diary also offers delightful personal accounts, observations, and vivid descriptions of an emerging capital city, Ankara, "gleaming in the sun, the brown uninhabited prairie,"<sup>7</sup> and Istanbul, an "ancient city [that] is one of the most beautiful achievements of man's creations."<sup>8</sup> Grew likened central Anatolia to Wyoming, for example. Perhaps most interestingly, his observations demonstrate a great deal of continuity and recurrence in Turkish politics and the U.S.-Turkey relationship.

Indeed, much was omitted from the 1952 publication. Moreover, I found that all published Turkish translations of Ambassador Grew's diaries were based only on the 210 pages in *Turbulent Era*. On the other hand, the relatively few academic manuscripts in Turkish or English that focused primarily on the history of the Turkish-American relationship prior to the Cold War were justifiably more selective in publishing the contents of the diary. The complete 2,973 pages of Ambassador Grew's diary in Turkey are indeed a trove of history. I estimate that half of the daily diary entries in this manuscript have not been published before.

Grew at one point considered abandoning recording entries in his diary, for fear of triviality, but he fortunately reconsidered. He reasoned that someday in the future, it may be possible to find "a certain amount of useful 'contemporary comment' throwing light on this particular period of the early days of the Turkish Republic and America's relations thereto—for if the Turkish Republic continues to exist, these will some day be looked upon as its 'early days' and history is built upon contemporary comment."<sup>9</sup> That is precisely what the diary provides for us today.

Two copies exist, one at the National Archives at College Park, outside Washington, D.C., the other at Houghton Library at Harvard University. Between 2017 and 2020, I digitized and annotated the diary and

tried to provide context to Ambassador Grew's observations, presented here. This manuscript is not a complete history of the Turkish Revolution or of the U.S.-Turkey relationship during the interwar period. It is, however, a more comprehensive rendering of Ambassador Grew's mission to Turkey based on his papers.

I have been an observer of the U.S.-Turkey relationship for almost 20 years, working as a researcher, journalist, consultant, and analyst in Washington, D.C. The post-Cold War relationship has been increasingly unstable, especially since 2003. There has been a marked divergence of short- and medium-term interests, regional priorities, and threat perceptions, which has deepened mutual mistrust. This is further complicated by the incongruous world views of the new leaders of Turkey and the United States. And so, analysts have debated the need for a redefinition of this relationship. Ambassador Grew's diary provides unique insight to this debate: It recounts the development of the U.S.-Turkey relationship in the absence of an overarching common threat and provides prescient analysis of the Turkish Revolution which still greatly influences politics in Turkey today. Both issues have bearing on the trajectory of the U.S.-Turkey relationship. My purpose is to contribute to an understanding of the formation of the bilateral relationship, prior to the Cold War, from the standpoint of one of the founders of modern American diplomacy and to the history of the Turkish Revolution from a unique perspective, that of an American Ambassador who witnessed it. The clarity of thought, revelation, and sincerity in Ambassador Grew's papers can aid the work of all stakeholders in this relationship.

As Grew wrote of his diary, "Anyway, here is the story, for what it is worth."<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> (The New York Times 1965)

<sup>2</sup> See the biography of Ambassador Grew (Heinrichs 1986)

<sup>3</sup> (Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945* 1952) p. xxii

<sup>4</sup> (Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945* 1952)

<sup>5</sup> (Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945* 1952) p. vii

<sup>6</sup> Diary, June 13, 1931. Commencement Address, Robert College. p. 2455–2456

<sup>7</sup> Diary, September 22, 1927. p. 22

<sup>8</sup> Diary, June 12, 1930. Radio speech from WOR, New York City. p. 1716

<sup>9</sup> Diary, April 27, 1931. p. 2347

<sup>10</sup> (Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945* 1952) p. ix

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been contemplating writing this book since 2012. It is the product of curiosity and genuine interest in the history and future of the relationship between the United States and Turkey. It wasn't until March 2020, however, that I found the time and daily dedication required to write a manuscript based on archival research. Truthfully, the pages in Ambassador Grew's diary from Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s provided a welcomed escape from the uncertainty of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

I was privileged of course, to have the support of many current and former colleagues, proficient researchers, and keen observers of the bilateral relationship. Alden Woods provided untiring support in archival research, editing, feedback and commentary—to whom I owe the most debt of gratitude. My former colleague Audrey Stevens was one of the first to read the entire manuscript and provided invaluable feedback and edits. I would also like to thank Didem Bora Özler, Hunter Sloan, Ben Harmon, Elif Şenvardarlı, and Elanur Ekiz, who assisted me in various stages of the project.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to Professors Candan Kirişçi, Kemal Kirişçi, and Sabri Sayarı, who took the time to read the manuscript in full and provided critical feedback and analysis. Their commentary and recommendations improved the work immensely. I would also like to thank Soli Özel, Bahadır Kaleağası, Barış Urhan, Eray Akdağ, Nicholas Danforth, and Murat Özgüç for providing early support, encouragement, comments, and timely advice as I worked through the manuscript.

In a year of uncertainty, the love and support of my family, my mother and father, brother, and uncle, and my partner, Kim Mikos, were deeply gratifying. I am thankful for them all.

Any errors or misinterpretations belong only to me and the conclusions and analysis in the manuscript do not necessarily reflect the views of my employers or of my current and former colleagues.

## NOTE ON NAMES AND TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration of Turkish names into English in Ottoman and early republican history has always been problematic and inconsistent, which could cause some confusion to the unacquainted reader. Several of these complications are present in this text.

Since Turkish was written in the Arabic script during the Ottoman era, Westerners used various transliterations of names which were usually based on a French spelling, although inconsistently. In 1928, the Turkish government adopted the Latin alphabet and standardized the spelling of names, which necessitated changes in English text. The U.S. Embassy enthusiastically implemented the changes. In 1930, the decision to formalize the spelling of Turkish affected the names of places as well. Finally, in 1934 surnames were adopted, which is important as modern readers may not be able to identify individuals by their first name and title alone.

As a rule, I have adhered to the spelling of names and places in direct quotes without modification. In narrative text, I have spelled names and places as they are used in modern Turkish today. Direct quotes from Ambassador Joseph Grew's diaries between 1927 and 1932 demonstrate the inconsistency in spelling and reveal the changes that were implemented over time.

For example, Ambassador Grew introduced Turkey's Foreign Minister as Tewfik Rouschdy in 1927. The following year he spelled his name as Tewfik Rushdi. In 1930, the spelling of the Foreign Minister's name evolved from Tewfik Rüştü to the modern and final spelling of Tevfik Rüştü. In 1934, the Foreign Minister adopted the surname, Aras.

Interestingly, Grew quibbled about the changes in one diary entry:

“Have been hard put to determine a consistent policy in spelling Turkish names in our official despatches. The standing instructions to diplomatic officers has directed us to use the local spelling of all proper names. Yet the new Turkish spelling often gives no phonetic idea whatever the correct pronunciation, for who would recognize that the pronunciation of Cevat is Djevad? It is amusing to see the tires hung on the backs of Dodge cars marked in large red letters Doç. Rüştü for Rushdi implies contortions of the mouth to which the average Anglo-Saxon is

far from accustomed. And the capital is no longer Angora but Ankara. However, in the absence of instructions to the contrary, we shall persevere in spelling these names a la Turque and let the department wrestle with them as well as it can.”<sup>1</sup>

And just as Angora became Ankara, Constantinople became Istanbul.

Since the period discussed in this manuscript precedes the adoption of the surname law, I have introduced individuals by indicating their adopted surnames in parentheses first, and later usually refrained from repeating it. For example:

President Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)  
 Prime Minister İsmet (İnönü)  
 Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü (Aras)

Finally, English speakers familiar with Turkey often used Turkish titles and honorifics when referring to Turkish individuals. The most common ones that appear in this manuscript are, in modern orthography and old transliteration:

Gazi or Ghazi: Veteran (“The Gazi” always refers to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk)  
 Paşa or Pasha: General  
 Vali: Governor  
 Hanım or Hanum: Ms. or an honorific for a woman  
 Bey: Mr. or an honorific for a man

Apropos, the inconsistency in spelling of Turkish names as evidenced in Grew’s diaries, was one of the reasons for the adoption of the Latin letters, which will be discussed under reforms in Chapter 9.

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<sup>1</sup> Diary, July 31–August 12, 1929. p. 1266



# INTRODUCTION

Joseph Clark Grew (1880–1965) was the first U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, serving between 1927–1932. His diary, over 2,973 pages typed in Istanbul and Ankara, “furnish a little color and atmosphere to a particular scene of the past.”<sup>1</sup> The observations and contemporary comment on revolutionary Turkey are vivid and dramatic. The diary tells of the U.S.-Turkey relationship before it was elevated to an alliance, and before it deteriorated, its merits questioned. It also shows how individuals mattered: Astute political leaders and tenacious diplomats were genuinely committed to furthering a relationship despite the odds. That is a summation of Ambassador Grew’s diaries in Turkey.

## **Patrician Diplomat of the Old School**

Ambassador Grew’s career spanned the time of the emergence of modern American diplomacy, from Theodore Roosevelt to Harry Truman.<sup>2</sup> It was a career that took him to important posts where he witnessed historic developments of tremendous consequence. He attended two major international peace conferences, was minister and ambassador, and was Undersecretary of State twice. He witnessed the early development of the modern Republic of Turkey, from 1927 to 1932, and was Ambassador to Tokyo from 1932 to 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. He came of age at “the expansion of American political and economic interest in world affairs toward the end of the nineteenth century... [which] gave new national importance to the work of diplomats and consuls,”<sup>3</sup> thereby becoming one of the first professionals to make a full career in the foreign service. He was tall, self-assured, and polished, according to *the New York Times*, which described him as a “patrician diplomat of the old school.”<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Clark Grew was born in Boston on May 27, 1880. He attended the Groton School, and then Harvard University in 1898. He was president of *The Advocate* and a senior editor of *The Harvard Crimson*, where he worked with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He graduated in 1902 and had the opportunity to travel the world, like many of his fortunate peers. It was this 18-month tour of the world that instilled in him “an unconquerable desire to serve his country abroad.”<sup>5</sup>

His first assignment was a clerkship in Cairo in 1904. The following year he married his fiancé Alice Perry, a direct descendent of Benjamin Franklin, America's first diplomat.<sup>6</sup> In 1906, he was appointed Third Secretary in Mexico City. That year his first daughter, Edith, was born in France. In 1907, Grew was appointed Third Secretary to St. Petersburg. Besides a stint in Vienna, Grew served at the embassy in Berlin from 1908 until the United States entered World War I in 1917, first as Second Secretary, later as Counselor of Embassy. His three younger daughters were born during this period: Lilla in St. Petersburg in 1907, Anita in Berlin in 1909, and Elizabeth (Elsie) in Vienna in 1912. Grew was Chief of Western European Affairs during the war and served as Secretary of the U.S. Commission to the Peace Conference in Paris, which provided him the opportunity to witness some of the negotiations. His appointment as Minister in Copenhagen came in 1920 and the year after in Berne, Switzerland, where he served as a back channel between the Department of State and the League of Nations, which the United States ultimately refused to join.<sup>7</sup>

In 1922, Grew was assigned to the Conference on Near Eastern Affairs at Lausanne. This is where he first met Turkey's new leaders, representatives of the government in Ankara and the indefatigable İsmet (İnönü) Paşa. Although the United States was not at war with Turkey, the Department of State dispatched a delegation of observers to defend its interests, one of whom was Grew. The Treaty of Lausanne was signed on July 24, 1923, making peace with the Allies and recognizing Turkey as an independent state. Grew continued to negotiate a separate treaty with Turkey, which was concluded on August 6, 1923. The Lausanne Conference "established Grew's reputation and led directly to his appointment as Under Secretary and later as Ambassador to Turkey," according to Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., Ambassador Grew's biographer.<sup>8</sup>

As Undersecretary of State between 1924 and 1927, Grew was instrumental in reforming the American Foreign Service. He advocated for professionals over political appointees and became known as the "father of the career service," according to *the New York Times*.<sup>9</sup> This, however, was not without controversy. The Rogers Act of 1924 amalgamated the Diplomatic and Consular Services into a unified Foreign Service, which created consternation among the diplomatic corps.<sup>10</sup> Despite some of his misgivings on the restructuring, Grew's influence on the Foreign Service was substantial. He even administered the foreign service exams of George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, later regarded as "wise men" of American foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

In 1927, Grew was appointed Ambassador to Turkey. *The New York Times* reported positively on his appointment to Ankara: "...he is particularly well-versed in the complicated questions involved in Turkey's new international status, and in her relations with the United States."<sup>12</sup> In Turkey he witnessed the emergence of a new republic and reestablished a crucial relationship. He later remembered his time in Turkey as one of exceeding happiness, unlike any of his previous posts.

In 1932, the year after Japan invaded Manchuria, Grew was appointed Ambassador to Tokyo, one of the most difficult assignments in the Foreign Service at the time. He served in Tokyo for ten years, until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Grew and his embassy were interned by Japan from December 8 to June 25, 1942. Upon his return to Washington, Grew was first Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and later assigned to his second tour as Undersecretary. He resigned in 1945, having reached retirement age. President Truman, on accepting his resignation, wrote to Grew, "May I on behalf of the nation give you this personal word of thanks for your long, faithful and efficient service during all those years."<sup>13</sup> It was the day after Japan surrendered, August 16, 1945.

## The Turkish Revolution

Ambassador Grew witnessed the Turkish Revolution and was profoundly impressed by what transpired. During a commencement address at Robert College in Istanbul in 1931, he said, "The leaders of the new Turkey have achieved a noble record during the past ten years. A social revolution is taking place. The old is rapidly being replaced with the new. Turkey is undertaking to achieve in a few years what other countries have taken centuries to accomplish..."<sup>14</sup> The force behind the revolution, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), summarized the emergence of modern Turkey as "...A devastated country on the edge of a cliff... bloody struggles with various enemies... years of war... And then a new homeland, a new society, a new state that is regarded internally and externally with deference and attained by continuous reforms... That is a brief summation of the general Turkish Revolution."<sup>15</sup>

The 600-year-old Ottoman Empire had been rapidly declining. After the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, political instability consumed Constantinople, the economy was in relative decline, the provinces were rife with unrest, and a steady loss of territory on three continents had accelerated. In 1908, the Ottomans lost Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Crete. The Italians invaded Tripolitania in 1911, ending the last hold of Ottoman rule in North Africa. The Balkan Wars (1912–1914) brought about the loss of

most of the remainder of Ottoman territories in Europe. And then the Ottomans, allied with Germany, lurched into World War I.

Kemal opposed Turkey entering the war on the German side, fearing that they would lose everything if the Central Powers were defeated.<sup>16</sup> Although there were some military victories against the Allies—most notably in Gallipoli—the Ottoman Empire, along with the Central Powers, was defeated. The British seized Iraq and Palestine, the Russians invaded eastern Anatolia, and the Arabs revolted in the Hijaz. The Armistice of Mudros, signed on October 30, 1918, ended hostilities with the Allied Powers. As a result, control of the Turkish Straits was ceded to the Allies, the Ottoman army was demobilized, and Constantinople was subsequently occupied. The Ottomans, having lost most of their European territories through the Balkan Wars a few years earlier, had now lost control in the Middle East and finally surrendered their capital. The French took control of southern Anatolia; the Italians landed in Antalya on the Mediterranean coast; and the Greeks occupied Izmir on the western coast of Turkey in 1919. The historian Bernard Lewis wrote, “Exhausted by eight years of almost continuous warfare, the once great Ottoman Empire lay supine in defeat, its capital occupied, its leaders in flight.”<sup>17</sup> The following year, representatives of the Ottoman government signed the Treaty of Sèvres, effectively partitioning what was left of Turkish territories in Anatolia. The Turkish Empire was defunct. What the allies and the pliant Ottoman government discounted, however, were the intentions of a 38-year-old Major General, Mustafa Kemal, who was already renowned for leading Turkish forces in a strategic victory against the allies in Gallipoli during World War I.

The Ottoman cabinet assigned Mustafa Kemal Paşa as Inspector General of the Ninth Ottoman Army and dispatched him to Samsun in northern Anatolia in May 1919. He was tasked with addressing reports of irregular attacks on Greek villages in Anatolia and restoring law and order to the satisfaction of the British. He was also instructed to disband all groups under the protection of the army and to confiscate arms and ammunition. Contravening his orders, Mustafa Kemal instead rallied the nationalist forces to the Turkish War of Independence. In June, the nationalists issued the Amasya Circular, proclaiming resistance and dismissing the government in Constantinople as ineffectual. Mustafa Kemal resigned from the army and led the resistance movement organized following the Erzurum and Sivas Congresses in 1919. Ankara was his headquarters. The Grand National Assembly convened on April 23, 1920, and Mustafa Kemal was duly elected president. Over the next two years, the nationalist forces regrouped and began pushing back.

On October 30, Kars was captured from the Armenians; the frontier fixed by the Treaty of Kars with the Soviets the following year; the Italians withdrew from Antalya in June; the French forces were compelled to withdraw from Cilicia by the French-Turkish Accord; and the Greek advance was reversed at the First and Second Battles of İnönü and the Battle of Sakarya. In the summer of 1922, the Turks launched the final offensive (*Büyük Taarruz*) against the Greek forces. Following a decisive victory on August 30 at Dumlupınar, nationalist forces entered Izmir on September 9, ending the Greek occupation of Anatolia. Jarred by the Turkish resurgence, the British and allied forces occupying Istanbul signed an armistice on October 11, 1922, and would eventually withdraw. The Grand National Assembly subsequently abolished the Ottoman Sultanate on November 1, 1922, and the last Sultan fled Istanbul on HMS *Malaya*. That month, the peace conference in Lausanne convened. The victorious Turkish delegation was led by İsmet Paşa, dispatched from the dusty battle fields in western Anatolia to the opulent Beau-Rivage Palace in Ouchy, Lausanne in Switzerland. Following eight months of exhausting negotiations, the Lausanne Treaty was signed on July 24, 1923, making peace between Turkey, the Allies, and Greece, and recognizing Turkey's independence with established frontiers. Mustafa Kemal described it as "a political victory unequalled in the history of the Ottoman era."<sup>18</sup> The allied forces evacuated Istanbul in October and the Republic of Turkey was declared by the Grand National Assembly on October 29, 1923, with Mustafa Kemal elected as its first President and İsmet as Premier.

The culmination of the Turkish Revolution was the introduction of an assiduous program of political and cultural transformation. Mustafa Kemal, arguably "the greatest nation-builder of modern times,"<sup>19</sup> would implement a series of reforms designed to elevate Turkey to levels commensurate to modern civilization, as he called it. First, a constitutional republic was established; sovereignty lay not with a Sultan, but with the people represented by the Grand National Assembly, which would elect a president. The Ottoman dynasty was exiled. The first republican constitution of 1924 set up the structure from which a genuine parliamentary democracy would eventually emerge. The caliphate was abolished, religious schools shuttered, and religious courts closed. Secularism, more properly defined as *laïcité* in the Turkish case, was central to the Turkish Revolution, where religion was controlled and freedom from religion protected. The following year the *Hat Law* passed, banning the *fez* and mandating westernized dress—thus ending outward religious identification and distinction. Muslim brotherhoods were dissolved; lodges and shrines closed. Turkey adopted the Gregorian calendar, replacing the Islamic lunar calendar, thereby facilitating

easier communication with the West, especially in business. In 1926, the new civil code based on the Swiss model was enacted, providing equal civil rights to women, outlawing polygamy, and institutionalizing gender equality before the law. The government also introduced a penal and commercial code based on Italy and Germany. In 1928, any reference to Islam as the official religion was struck from the constitution. That year, the Latin alphabet and numerals were adopted. In 1930, women gained the right to vote in local elections and were appointed as judges for the first time. Women's suffrage at the national level was introduced in 1934 by constitutional amendment and women were first elected to parliament in 1935. Adoption of the metric system; requiring Turkish, rather than Arabic, in the call to prayer; and other reforms, would follow. With the institutionalization of surnames, Mustafa Kemal became known as Atatürk, "father of the Turks."

Andrew Mango, who wrote a landmark biography of Atatürk, described him as one of the most important statesmen in modern history: "He is said to have steered Turkey towards Europe and the West. This is true to the extent that the civilization to which he aspired had, and still has, its centre in the West. But his allegiance was to an ideal, not a geographical area. The ideal of catching up with modern civilization wherever it may be found, and of contributing to its further development..."<sup>20</sup>

Ambassador Grew wrote, "I am most keenly interested in the progressive program of the Turkish Republic and its leaders. They have their fair share of faults and failings... But they are on the right track and with a little luck and a generation or two of peace, they will make good."<sup>21</sup> He bemoaned in his diary that practically no one understood the significance of what was happening in Turkey and very few were interested. He was committed to changing this. As ambassador he worked tirelessly to introduce Turkey to the United States and the United States to Turkey. Some of his public diplomacy successes were inspired. His views, as recorded in his diary, on what was indeed a bold reform program, its prospects for success or failure, and commentary on domestic political developments are fascinating. Equally important were his efforts in developing the U.S.-Turkey relationship.

## **Turkey Must Be Preserved**

The foundations of the U.S.-Turkey alliance rest in the Cold War when U.S. and Turkish threat perceptions of the Soviet Union increased congruently. Just as Washington started to consider the Soviet threat more seriously and acknowledged the urgent need to contain Soviet expansion,

Turkey started to suffer greater pressure on its territory from Moscow. The Soviets, in 1945, signaled interest in basing rights in the Turkish Straits and adjustment of the eastern frontier.<sup>22</sup> The U.S., however, was initially non-committal to Turkish requests for support.<sup>23</sup> Soviet military activity in the region and territorial claims on Turkey confirmed George Kennan's persistent and forceful arguments that the Soviet Union was expansionist and needed to be contained. The "Long Telegram" by Kennan, who was *Charge d'Affaires* in Moscow in 1946, became the most "influential cable in the history of the American Foreign Service."<sup>24</sup> President Harry S. Truman was already disillusioned with the Kremlin and was persuaded that the Soviets intended to attack Turkey.<sup>25</sup> In a show of force, on April 5, 1946, the U.S.S. *Missouri* was sent to Istanbul, bearing the remains of Turkish Ambassador to the U.S. Münir Ertegün, who died in Washington during World War II. Following a stronger notice delivered to Ankara from Moscow calling for a joint Soviet-Turkish defense mechanism of the Straits, the U.S. position hardened. Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson thought, "For global reasons, Turkey must be preserved if we do not wish to see other bulwarks in Western Europe and the Far East crumbling at a fast rate."<sup>26</sup> The case for defending Turkey against Soviet aggression was articulated unequivocally in a memorandum prepared for the president by the Departments of State, War and Navy on August 15, 1946:

"In our opinion the primary objective of the Soviet Union is to obtain control of Turkey. We believe that if the Soviet Union succeeds in introducing into Turkey armed forces with the ostensible purpose of enforcing the joint control of the Straits, the Soviet Union will use these forces in order to obtain control over Turkey. If the Soviet Union succeeds in its objective obtaining control over Turkey it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining control over Greece and over the whole Near and Middle East. It is our experience that when the Soviet Union obtains predominance in an area, American and, in fact, all Western influences and contacts are gradually eliminated from that area. In our opinion, therefore, the establishment by the Soviet Union of bases in the Dardanelles or the introduction of Soviet armed forces into Turkey on some other pretext would, in the natural course of events, results in Greece and the whole Near and Middle East, including the Eastern Mediterranean, falling under Soviet control and in those areas being cut off from the Western world... We, therefore, feel that it is in the vital interests of the United States that the Soviet Union should not by force or threat of force succeed in its unilateral plans with regard to the Dardanelles and Turkey... The only thing which will deter the

Russians will be the conviction that the United States is prepared, if necessary, to meet aggression with force of arms... In our opinion, therefore, the time has come when we must decide that we shall resist with all means at our disposal any Soviet aggression and in particular, because the case of Turkey would be so clear, any Soviet aggression against Turkey."<sup>27</sup>

President Truman approved the policy and stated that he was prepared to pursue it "to the end."<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Truman Doctrine emerged. The Soviets, in the face of U.S. resolve, acquiesced. The following year, President Truman called for providing aid to Greece and Turkey in a joint session of Congress and said, "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."<sup>29</sup>

Although Turkey's ultimate accession to the Atlantic alliance was not straightforward or preordained,<sup>30</sup> the trajectory was set. Military assistance under the Truman Doctrine was bolstered by economic assistance under the Marshall Plan. Turkey contributed troops to Korea in 1950 and two years later was afforded full membership in NATO. U.S. aid and military presence in Turkey would steadily increase. One of Ambassador Grew's successors, Ambassador George C. McGhee, would write that a new era had begun, and that "Once and for all, Turkey had become an integral part of Europe and the West."<sup>31</sup> In fact, Turkey would join all post-war international and regional institutions promoted by the United States: the Bretton Woods institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Council of Europe.<sup>32</sup> It also applied for associational membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, the forerunner of the European Union (EU). Market liberalization in the 1980s and progress in democratization ultimately provided for the start of accession negotiations with the EU in 2005, almost a decade after the Customs Union agreement with the bloc. Full EU membership, however, still evades Turkey.

Despite the strong foundational structure of Turkey's relationship with the United States and the West more broadly, maintaining symbiotic ties has not been easy. The U.S.-Turkey relationship has always been defined by dramatic swings, periods of divergence and contention, and stages of convergence and concurrence. This has grown even more difficult since the end of the Cold War, without an existential common threat and diverging interests and priorities in the Middle East. In fact, the most portentous debate among observers and policymakers today is how to define



the U.S.-Turkey relationship in the post-Cold War era. So, it is important to remember that this relationship was forged in the absence of a major common threat before the Cold War. While the Cold War provided the foundation of the U.S.-Turkey alliance, the groundwork was laid by Ambassador Grew in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

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This book is organized in four parts. Part I provides a historical overview of the U.S.-Turkey relationship from its inception in 1800 to Ambassador Grew's arrival in Istanbul in 1927. It also recounts in colorful detail his first few months in Turkey and his first impressions of a nascent republic. Part II lays out the early issues in the bilateral relationship that required Ambassador Grew's attention: Problems over missionary, educational, and philanthropic interests; American business concerns; commercial and economic ties; and the laborious treaty negotiations which established the basis of the U.S.-Turkey relationship. Part III introduces revolutionary Turkey, political developments, and Grew's observations and assessment of internal affairs. The final section recounts Ambassador Grew's final days in Turkey and his reflections over the preceding five years. Intermittently dispersed throughout the text are some of Grew's personal experiences that are naturally recorded in a daily diary.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> (Grew 1952) p. xxiii

<sup>2</sup> (Heinrichs 1986)

<sup>3</sup> (Heinrichs 1986)

<sup>4</sup> (The New York Times 1965)

<sup>5</sup> (Heinrichs 1986) p. 8

<sup>6</sup> (Heinrichs 1986)

<sup>7</sup> (Heinrichs 1986)

<sup>8</sup> (Heinrichs 1986)

<sup>9</sup> (The New York Times 1965)

<sup>10</sup> (Isaacson and Thomas 2013) For more information see: (Heinrichs 1986) (Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945* 1952)

<sup>11</sup> (Isaacson and Thomas 2013)

<sup>12</sup> (The New York Times 1927)

<sup>13</sup> (Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945* 1952) p. 1526

<sup>14</sup> Diary, June 13, 1931. Commencement Address, Robert College. p. 2455–2456

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- <sup>15</sup> Speech by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at the Fourth Convention of the Republican People's Party (CHP), 9 May, 1935. (Atatürk, Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri 1997) p.398
- <sup>16</sup> (P. B. Kinross 1964) p. 78
- <sup>17</sup> (Lewis 2002) p. 241
- <sup>18</sup> (Atatürk, Nutuk: 1919–1927 1994) p.518
- <sup>19</sup> (Mango 2000) p.xi
- <sup>20</sup> (Mango 2000) p.538
- <sup>21</sup> Diary, March 2, 1929. p. 1075
- <sup>22</sup> (Harris, Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971 1972) p. 16
- <sup>23</sup> (Harris, Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971 1972)
- <sup>24</sup> (Isaacson and Thomas 2013)
- <sup>25</sup> (Harris, Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971 1972) p. 19
- <sup>26</sup> (Isaacson and Thomas 2013) p. 370
- <sup>27</sup> (Foreign Relations of the United States 1946) Volume VII p. 840–842
- <sup>28</sup> (Foreign Relations of the United States 1946) Volume VII p. 840–842
- <sup>29</sup> President Harry S. Truman's Address Before a Joint Session of Congress, March 12, 1947.
- <sup>30</sup> For more information: (Harris, Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971 1972)
- <sup>31</sup> (McGhee, Turkey Joins the West 1954)
- <sup>32</sup> (Kirisçi 2018)

**PART I:**  
**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**  
**(1800–1927)**

# CHAPTER 1

## A GOOD OMEN

*“It is particularly significant that the Sultan, from his palace, had noticed the stars in the United States flag, and remarked that, as his own flag was decorated with two of the heavenly bodies, he thought there must be some affinity between the laws, religion and manners of the Turks and the Americans, and he considered this coincidence as a good omen for the future of friendly intercourse between the two nations.”*

—Joseph C. Grew

While the relationship between Turkey and the United States before the Cold War was widely regarded to be nominal, contact was even more sporadic before World War I. After an inadvertent initiation of the relationship in 1800, Ottoman-American ties primarily developed along commercial and philanthropic lines. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the United States was emerging on the world stage, the Ottoman Empire was in precipitous decline. First official contact between these two countries occurred in 1800. Ambassador Grew, during his mission to Turkey, would frequently invoke this initiation in his speeches:

“On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of November in the year 1800, the first official representative of the United States of America to visit Turkey, in the person of Captain William Brainbridge [sic], dropped anchor in the harbor of Constantinople in his ship the GEORGE WASHINGTON flying the stars and stripes. It is recorded that the Turkish representative who was sent to the ship observed that such a nation as the ‘United States’ had never been heard of before by the Turkish Government and he desired that Captain Brainbridge [sic] would explicitly state whence he came. The latter explained that his vessel came from the ‘New World’ which Columbus had discovered, on hearing which the official repaired immediately to the shore. In a few hours he returned, and for the first time came on board the frigate, bringing with him a lamb and a bunch of flowers, the former as an emblem of peace and the latter of welcome. The ship was then conducted

into the Golden Horn and the officers were thenceforth shown every mark of attention and respect.

“It is particularly significant that the Sultan, from his palace, had noticed the stars in the United States flag, and remarked that, as his own flag was decorated with two of the heavenly bodies, he thought there must be some affinity between the laws, religion and manners of the Turks and the Americans, and he considered this coincidence as a good omen for the future of friendly intercourse between the two nations.”<sup>1</sup>

Ambassador Grew delivered these remarks at the Constantinople Woman’s College on Charter Day, March 20, 1929. He said, “A century and a quarter have passed since that memorable day; vast changes have occurred in the body politic of this country; but the prophetic sense of that former Sultan, it seems to me, has been well exemplified. Through trade and commerce, through travel and education, through art and archeology, the friendly intercourse between our two nations has developed and expanded throughout the years.”<sup>2</sup>

The Sultan was Selim III. Captain William Bainbridge, however, had sailed the *George Washington* from Algiers to Constantinople under duress to deliver tribute from the Dey of Algiers to the Sublime Porte. The Barbary States were Ottoman tributaries and would generate revenue by threatening the safe passage of foreign merchant vessels in the Mediterranean Sea. Accordingly, in 1800, Bainbridge was dispatched to Algiers to pay the annual tribute. The Dey—Mustapha, ruler of Algiers, upon collecting payment demanded that Bainbridge deliver his tribute to the Sultan in Constantinople, whom he had offended by signing a treaty with France. He also demanded that the *George Washington* sail under the Algerian flag. Bainbridge was obliged, under threat of gunfire, to comply. He would replace the flag once they were underway and out of range. When the American frigate entered the Bosphorus, the Ottoman government, known as the Sublime Porte, was officially advised for the first time of a new nation in the new world. Captain Bainbridge was well received and provided protection in Turkish territories by *firman*, an edict, which would later prove useful when he returned to Algiers for a second audience with the Dey.<sup>3</sup> What began as an indignity that ultimately led to the Barbary Wars, also marked the first official contact between Turkey and the United States.

Following the defeat of the Barbary States and the deinstitutionalization of piracy, American trade in the Mediterranean grew. In the 1810s, around ten American ships per year would arrive at Turkish ports; by 1830 this increased to over thirty ships per year.<sup>4</sup> As American merchants expanded

into the Ottoman ports of Izmir, Alexandria, and Beirut, an Ottoman-American commercial treaty became necessary.<sup>5</sup> In 1829, President Andrew Jackson ordered a mission to Sultan Mahmud II to establish favorable trade relations.<sup>6</sup> Previous attempts to establish relations and negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce were either abandoned or unsuccessful.<sup>7</sup> Jackson wanted to rebuild the Ottoman navy, which was decimated at the Battle of Navarino during the Greek War of Independence two years earlier. Negotiations between the Turkish and American delegations concluded on May 7, 1830, and the Ottoman-American Treaty was signed, providing most favored nation status and extending capitulations, which granted extraterritorial rights in judicial matters and taxation to the United States and its citizens living in the empire.<sup>8</sup> Following the establishment of formal relations, the U.S. opened the American Legation in Istanbul in 1831, which was elevated to an embassy in 1906; the first Ottoman Embassy in Washington, however, would not open until 1867.<sup>9</sup> Although the U.S. Senate rejected the secret clause in the treaty that stipulated a contract to rebuild the Ottoman navy, Henry Eckford, a well-known American shipbuilder and naval architect, and Foster Rhodes, his successor, would work in Turkey throughout the 1830s to construct several ships for the Ottomans and manage their shipyard.<sup>10</sup> The Ottoman-American Treaty of 1830 governed relations for over 85 years.

During this time, the proliferation of American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and their work in education and philanthropy emerged as a central theme in Ottoman-American relations. By 1913, around 450 American missionary schools were teaching 26,000 students throughout the empire.<sup>11</sup> Since it was forbidden for Muslims to convert and the Jewish community was apathetic to the Protestant missionaries, much of the proselytizing targeted the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the first political crisis between the Ottoman Empire and the United States was triggered by the Ottoman suppression of the Armenian revolutionary movement in 1894–1896. Public opinion in the United States was outraged at reports of massacres of Armenians in eastern Anatolia. The U.S. Senate adopted two resolutions, in 1894 and 1895, expressing concern about the atrocities, especially concerning the harm inflicted on American citizens and property.<sup>13</sup> The reports from American missionaries in the East, along with increased Armenian emigration to the United States, would significantly affect the early development of Turkish-American relations.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the expansion of missionary, educational, and philanthropic work in the early period of the relationship, diplomatic ties and trade improved. Following the ratification of the Ottoman-American Treaty, trade between the Ottoman Empire and the United States grew