



## ACTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON LAUSANNE: SOME PREDOMINANTLY DISCUSSIONS IN TURKISH POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE AND MEDIA ON CURRENT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COURSE

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### Abstract

Treaty of Lausanne opened for discussion at the level of head of state in Turkey, for the first time since the day it is signed. July 15, 2016, when a coup attempt took place in Turkey, was the date that ignited the wick of this debate. The opinion as to Turkey is desired to be cleaved by a network linked both domestic and abroad, reveals a New War of Independence perception. The criticisms which are made at the level of president on Lausanne could evaluate as efforts to create a ground for a powerful management system in Turkey or can be seen as a diplomatic move against foreign powers which are feeding hostility to Turkey. New diplomatic move is based on firstly the National Pact, the goal of the Turkish National Struggle which could not be fully achieved in Lausanne and secondly the New Turkey Ideal as a future perspective. There is no doubt this acceptance and course of action have not been adopted by all the parties in Turkey. Criticisms on Lausanne have received serious responses, this treaty is emphasized by the opposition politicians as the title deed of Turkey. It has been observed that these discussions have increased in a dizzying pace both in the political arena and in the media. The Lausanne discussions were reflected in international relations and recent affairs have heightened the tension in Turkish-Greek relations. It is probable that the uncertainties of some unobtrusive issues which are not solved by justice during the Lausanne negotiations might create some problems in the future. For this reason, it is inevitable that the treaty must be revised peacefully and fairly in today's conditions.

**Keywords:** National Pact, Treaty of Lausanne, Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish Foreign Policy, International Current Affairs.

### Introduction

Even if the Treaty of Lausanne remains in effect in many regards as a founding reference text, the reshaping of historical and social conditions and new requests are inevitably brought up for discussion again.

July 15, 2016 is the beginning date of these discussions in Turkish Policy. The coup attempt was perceived as a threat to the existence of Turkey. Particularly President Erdoğan stated that a New War of Independence was given against this coup and the other attacks. Erdoğan regarded July 15 as second Independence of War of the Turkish Nation. By questioning the Treaty of Lausanne signed after the War of Independence, Erdoğan gave the message that the position of Turkey will be stronger after the second Independence of War. But it is difficult to say that these evaluations are fully accepted in the internal and external public opinion. These criticisms have caused a serious reaction in the political circles where the Treaty of Lausanne was accepted as an unquestionable text.

In the context of international relations, similar of these reactions came from Greece. In this process, different viewpoints between Turkey and Greece about Lausanne were expressed by the highest representatives of two states. It should be mentioned that Lausanne is open to debate because of some unsolved issues arising from its content. Some issues that were not taken into consideration during the agreement process of the treaty are standing in front of the states as potential crisis areas today. This article evaluates the internal and foreign political developments and the process of change about the Treaty of Lausanne.

### 1. Lausanne Discussions in Turkish Policy Agenda and Their Repercussions in Media

The coup attempt of July 15, 2016 has been a milestone in the beginning of Lausanne discussions in Turkey. In his speech at the Presidential Complex on September 29, 2016, President Erdoğan,<sup>1</sup> the 12<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Turkey, noted that "July 15 was the second Independence of War of the Turkish Nation"<sup>2</sup> and added that the Treaty of Lausanne could not be regarded as a "victory", on the grounds that

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<sup>1</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took office as president on August 28, 2014, and is still the president of Turkey.

<sup>2</sup> At the "Democracy and Martyrs Rally" held at the Yenikapı Rally Area on August 7, 2016, Erdoğan said that a faith similar to the one that had led Mustafa Kemal Pasha to initiate the War of Independence, and which helped the National Struggle in its victory, was experienced on July 15 (TCCB, 2018b). In a speech he delivered in Ankara on August 10, 2018, Erdoğan made this analogy referring to



the delegation had failed to carry out their task properly, and that Turkey had been persuaded to adopt the Treaty of Lausanne after the Treaty of Sèvres. He also noted that some Aegean islands close to the Anatolian mainland had been lost due to the Treaty of Lausanne, as a result of which problems like the Aegean continental shelf were still being experienced, and that Turkey was still wrestling with such problems<sup>3</sup>. Erdoğan stated that the coup attempt of July 15, 2016 had been an attack targeting the existence of the country and nation, and that had it been successful, a treaty with terms harsher than those in the Treaty of Sèvres would have been imposed on Turkey. In this regard, he claimed that July 15 was an attempt to occupy the territories that had remained in Turkey's possession after losing the majority of its territories in a short period of time from 1912 to 1923 (AA, 2018a).

Erdoğan's words on the Peace Treaty of Lausanne stirred up controversy in the public,<sup>4</sup> although the leaders of the opposition parties also made statements. CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said: *"The concluding of the Treaty of Lausanne, to replace the Treaty of Sèvres imposed on the Ottoman State, was the crowning of the Turkish War of Independence... The greatest triumph at Lausanne was the Republic of Turkey"* (Hürriyet, 2018a), *"The Treaty of Lausanne is Turkey's title deed. We defend Lausanne... Yesterday, you said Lausanne was our title deed. Today, you say it was treason... What kind of a mindset is this!"* (Hürriyet, 2018b). MHP Leader Devlet Bahçeli noted: *"I am puzzled. Our new topic is Lausanne! We are discussing whether it was a victory or a defeat ... The Treaty of Lausanne was the prize of a challenging process that confirmed the Turkish victory and made the international community accept it... There may have been some negative aspects to it, along with the positive aspects... Our duty is to maintain its dignity and legitimacy... The Treaty of Lausanne is the legal instrument that confirms the independence of the Republic of Turkey... Everyone should adhere to the framework of the message given by the President on the 93<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne"* (Hürriyet, 2018c).

Erdoğan's statements were also being discussed in Greece, and the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the statement: *"The reality concerning the Treaty of Lausanne cannot be denied by anyone, including Ankara. Everyone should respect that. No matter how agonizing it is."* The Greek media, commenting on Erdoğan's statements, claimed that the Treaty of Lausanne was being questioned in Turkey for the first time (Cumhuriyet, 2018a).

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responding to the allegation that some of the Aegean islands that were being discussed again<sup>5</sup> following Erdoğan's statements on the Peace Treaty of Lausanne, had been handed over to Greece while the AKP was in government, made the statement: *"The allegation and news that Turkey has handed over some of the islands and/or islets in the Aegean Sea to another country since 2003 are totally false... It is known that we and Greece have a range of disputes that are connected to each other in the context of the Aegean Sea. The ownership of some islets and rocks in the Aegean Sea and the absence of sea borders defined by a*

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the defense of the homeland, reminding of Mustafa Kemal Pasha's well known saying *"There is no line of defense but defense of the territory. This territory is the whole of the motherland"*, and stated that people should keep round the clock watch over democracy in every part of the country (TCCB, 2018c). In another speech he delivered at a prize-giving ceremony on November 3, 2016, Erdoğan compared the events of July 15, 2016 with dates and events that are milestones in the Turkish history, such as those in 1071, 1299, 1453 and 1923 (TCCB, 2018g).

<sup>3</sup> In a message published on the President's Website on July 24, 2016 on the 93<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne, which was no different to the usual anniversary celebrations in previous periods, Erdoğan noted: *"Today, it is the 93<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne, the founding instrument of our Republic. The victory won by our beloved nation through faith, courage and self-sacrifice was registered in the sphere of diplomacy and international law by the Treaty of Lausanne. This treaty is the title deed of our newly founded state"* (TCCB, 2018a). This variation in Erdoğan's second speech about 2 months later with regard to his opinion on the Treaty of Lausanne can be said to be related to an attempt to take action in line with the changing conditions, risks and threats, both internally and externally. It can be interpreted that he, taking into account the strategic and tactical priorities, meant to say to the internal and external actors of July 15: *"We know very well our gains as well as what we could not achieve at Lausanne, and today we have the courage and determination to withstand and respond to any change and challenge."*

<sup>4</sup> Prof. Baskın Oran criticized the statement, saying: *"Conservative politicians have always denigrated the Treaty of Lausanne ... four countries tell Erdoğan that he is violating international law with regard to Mosul. For this reason, he brings up the Dodecanese. The Dodecanese were ceded to Greece with the Treaty of Athens of 1913, not by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 ... This statement was made in an effort to extend the State of Emergency from the viewpoint of domestic politics, and to set up a national army in Syria from the viewpoint of foreign policy"* (Cumhuriyet, 2018b).

<sup>5</sup> In his speech in Kocaeli Aydınlar Ocağı on January 29, 2015, Staff [R] Colonel Ümit Yalın asserted the following claims which received broad media coverage: *"Currently, we cannot visit 16 islands, including the Donkey Island, Rhodes, which belonged to us for 462 years, without a passport. The islands that we did not cede at Lausanne and which we won through battles have been handed over without fighting during this government's term in office. The Greek Naval Forces and Air Forces are not intercepted when they breach the border, while the Turkish Naval and Air Forces are immediately confronted when they engage in a minor border violation. On Donkey Island, which is within the boundaries of Aydın province, Greek underwater demolition teams are deployed, and missiles and anti-aircraft guns are pointed at Izmir. Greece has intercepted 1,047 of our aircraft in one year"* (Kocaeli, 2018).



valid international agreement between Greece and Turkey in connection therewith are among these disputes... There has been no change to the legal status of the islands, islets of rocks in the Aegean Sea for the last 13 years"<sup>6</sup> (MFA, 2018b).

In connection with the criticism directed by Erdoğan towards the Treaty of Lausanne, the transfer of the Tomb of Suleyman Shah came to the agenda, on which CHP Mersin Provincial Chairman Abdullah Özyiğit stated the following: "The Struggle for Independence against the whole world ended up with victory at Lausanne. Those who fail to understand this victory are those that have moved the Tomb of Suleyman Shah, which is the only Turkish territory outside its own borders" (Mersinhaber, 2018), while AKP Mersin Provincial Deputy Chairman Levent Ali Bostan responded: "38 soldiers of ours were serving there. We could not put their lives at risk. By removing the Tomb, we have saved Turkey from being dragged into the battlefield in the Middle East... The Tomb is still on Syrian territory... Turkey has not lost any territory with this move, and this is not the first time the Tomb has been moved" (Milliyet, 2018a).

While the Treaty of Lausanne was returning to the agenda as a hot topic in Turkey on September 29, 2016, it was announced in a press statement by the United States and the Russian Federation on October 12, 2016 that the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov and the US Secretary of State John Kerry would meet in Lausanne, Switzerland, with the participation of representatives of other states, to discuss the situation in Syria (BBC, 2018). The meeting was held at the Beau-Rivage Palace Hotel, where the Treaty of Lausanne was signed, fixing the borders of Turkey, and was attended by representatives from the United States, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Qatar. Although no decision could be reached at the meeting, Lausanne became a hot topic on the agenda of the international community, along with Turkey (CNNTÜRK, 2018).

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu made the following points in his reply on November 24, 2016 to a parliamentary question<sup>7</sup> submitted to the Grand National Assembly regarding the islands in the Aegean Sea (TBMM, 2018):

- It is a problem that the ownership of some islets and rocks in the Aegean Sea and the sea borders have not been defined by an international agreement;
- the question of the ownership of the Aegean Islands is a legal matter related to the interpretation of the relevant articles of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and the Treaty of Paris of 1947;
- policies from the previous period on the issues in the Aegean Sea are still being pursued;
- the activities of Greece relating to the geographical areas, the status of which is controversial, will not be accepted;
- Kardak belongs to Turkey; and
- Turkey wants such problems to be resolved equitably within the framework of international law, provided that its national interests are protected.

In a speech in which he stated that the administrative system rather than the regime may be changed in Turkey, and that the republic and the presidential system could coexist, Erdoğan made a historical analogy when talking about the change that Turkey would undergo, noting that after the closure of the last Ottoman Parliament, it was, in a sense, reopened as the Grand National Assembly and then the Republic was proclaimed (TCCB, 2018o). On this matter, Erdoğan again made a historical analogy between the bombing of the Grand National Assembly during the July 15 coup attempt and the closure of the last Ottoman Parliament, and stated that efforts were made to pave the way for the occupation of the country by rendering these institutions representing the national will dysfunctional in both cases (TCCB, 2018p).

In a speech delivered at the Atatürk Commemoration on November 10, 2017, Erdoğan stated that the goal of the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli) that had been established prior to the War of Independence had not been backed in the following period, that Turkey was harassed today right at the National Pact borders, that this was unacceptable, and that the interventions at Idlib and Afrin in Operation Euphrates Shield were aimed at protecting these borders. In the same speech, Erdoğan noted that Turkey had made some gains, along with some losses at Lausanne, and that the key reason behind the current security problems along the southern borders was the concessions made in the National Pact (TCCB, 2018r). In another speech, Erdoğan

<sup>6</sup> Following this statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussions on the subject continued, and Gaziantep Deputy Ümit Özdağ held a press conference, in which he said: "A commission should be set up in the Assembly to investigate how the 17 Turkish islands have been occupied, as well as the intelligence-related military and political mistakes that have been made" (Meclishaber, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> In the written parliamentary question no. 7/8299 submitted by Antalya Deputy (CHP) Niyazi Nefi Kara to Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, information was requested on the following issues: Whether some of the islands and rocks in the Turkish territorial waters are occupied by Greece; whether Turkish airspace has been violated; whether sovereignty of the Kardak islets has been relinquished; and whether any efforts have been made regarding the alleged problems.



related the National Pact to the incidents along the southern border, and indicated that Northern Syria, where efforts were underway to establish a terrorism corridor, fell within the borders of the National Pact (TCCB, 2018s).

In a speech in which he underlined the historical ties with Mosul, President Erdoğan stated that the Arabs, Turkmens and Kurds resident in Mosul were brothers of Turkey, that there were many related people on the two sides of the border, and consequently, it was impossible to ignore the issues in this region (TCCB, 2018d). In another speech, Erdoğan stated that some groups had been annoyed by his mention of the National Pact when he said “...Kirkuk and Mosul<sup>8</sup>belonged to us in the past”, and reminded that Mustafa Kemal Pasha had put forward the National Pact as the direction that Turkey should pursue (TCCB, 2018e).

## 2. President Erdoğan’s Efforts to Synthesize the National Pact with the New Turkey Ideal

The National Pact has always been paid attention as the ideal of the Turkish War of Independence. The National Pact has declared minimum requirements that must be maintained for the existence of Turkey to the whole world. It was the main text that the Turkish diplomats aimed to reach in the Lausanne negotiations. It has always been argued that the goals in this document have never been completely realized.

While the National Pact returned to the agenda and has remained there for the last 30 years with a mental dynamism that sometimes turned into a brainstorm in Özal’s period, the issue has been picked up also by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The new national security orientation, with its internal and external political, economic and military components, has played the key role in this. Looking at the big picture, it can be said that President Erdoğan was essentially acting on the basis of a new national security doctrine, although its elements and dynamics were not clearly defined. It is possible to observe the theoretical and practical traces of a long-term march from tradition to the future. Even though the efforts towards a new articulation and synthesis may be thought to be in the infancy stage due to the improvisation and excitement arising from leadership, it may be considered, when carefully examined, that its focus was a profound art of strategic communication and interaction, performed to avoid reactions and preventive impacts. If a name is to be given to it, this process can be interpreted as an attempt to formulate the New Turkey Ideal with an ingenious composition made on the basis of the National Pact discourse. That said, it is certainly possible to find the traces and influences of the December 17–25 Judicial Interventions and the July 15 Coup attempt in its groundwork. Regardless of intentions and discourses, however, legitimate and reasonable political decisions and preferences to be instituted by an ‘official document’ approach, written by the input of every level with guidance of long-term strategic thinking, can be permanent.

President Erdoğan stressed that there was a difference between the previous period and the recent period in Turkey, and that a change was necessary. He noted that a new, great and powerful Turkey had been constructed in this process that could not have been achieved within the single-party period (TCCB, 2018e). In another speech, Erdoğan said that the New Turkey would be the culmination of a 2,200-year-long state tradition in Turkey, a 1,400-year-long civilization, a 1,000-year-long presence in the region and a 93-year-old Republic (TCCB, 2018h). Erdoğan also indicated that the resistance to the July 15, 2016 coup attempt had been the “Cemre<sup>9</sup> of New Turkey”, and that the founder will of New Turkey could be found on the streets during the coup attempt, and subsequently at the Yenikapı rally. Erdoğan stated that in the new period, efforts would be made to put into practice an inclusive administrative understanding in which individuals would not be marginalized (TCCB, 2018k). In his speech on December 14, 2016, Erdoğan noted that attempts had been made to hamper the struggle for a new, free and prosperous Turkey with the Gezi Park protests, police and judicial interventions, terrorist attacks, and finally, the July 15 coup attempt, and added that these attempts could not be considered as targeting only him, the government or their political party (TCCB, 2018l). Erdoğan said that Turkey had engaged in its biggest struggle since the War of

<sup>8</sup> When Iraqi Kurdistan took the decision to hold a referendum on September 25, 2017, Lausanne came to the agenda again. The National Security Council of Turkey published a statement saying: “If Iraqi Kurdistan insists on this misdeed, which is unacceptable for Turkey as well as the United Nations Security Council, international community and Iraq central government, grave consequences that will harm Northern Iraq and the entire region will be inevitable. If this referendum is held despite all our warnings, Turkey will apply the rights bestowed upon it by bilateral and international agreements” (Milliyet, 2018c). As to the referendum, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said: “... the referendum is an issue of national security for Turkey. Regarding this issue of national security, Turkey is determined to exercise its rights arising from international and bilateral treaties ... What are these treaties? Articles 3 and 16 of the Treaty of Lausanne; the Treaty of Ankara of 1926; the Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighborhood between Iraq and Turkey of 1946, and the Treaty of Border Security and Cooperation between Turkey and Iraq of 1983. Briefly, this is what it is about: Any attempt to alter the current statuses of states both in Syria and Iraq is something Turkey will never accept, pursuant to its rights under the existing treaties. So, we will do what is necessary” (Milliyet, 2018d). These are statements of the current sovereign nation state, rather than those made within the spirit of the National Pact a century ago.

<sup>9</sup> Cemre in Turkish means “any of the three radiations of heat which supposedly fall in succession from the sun into the air, the water, and the earth in February and March.”





Independence, and that if this struggle was abandoned, the country would find itself under the conditions imposed by the Treaty of Sèvres (TCCB, 2018m). He noted also that if this struggle was won, the goals of 2023 would be attained and the visions for 2053 and 2071 would also be shaped (TCCB, 2018n).

In another speech, President Erdoğan pointed out that he saw a distinction between the physical borders and the borders of the heart, referring to the National Pact and the Treaty of Lausanne. Speaking with reference to the Iraq and Syria issues, he said that these regions should be considered in terms of conscientious, historical and legal contexts, and not just their physical borders. He stated that Turkey had designs on the territories of no country, but rather was making efforts to stand up to those with such designs that sought to separate these countries along ethnic and denominational lines through new conflicts. While describing the borders of the heart, Erdoğan defined a vast area from Europe to Africa, from the Mediterranean to Central Asia, and from the Balkans to the Caucasus (TCCB, 2018f).

President Erdoğan pointed out in his speech at the Police Academy on November 11, 2016 that in the final period of the Ottoman Empire, 780,000 square kilometers were left over from an area of approximately 3 million square kilometers as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne, saying that Turkey had lost the sovereignty of territories that were very close to its mainland. In the same speech, he said that with the War of Independence, the partitioning of Turkey planned under the Treaty of Sèvres had been rejected, but it was no longer possible to regard the Peace Treaty of Lausanne that was concluded at the end of the war as sufficient for Turkey. He noted that before engaging in the War of Independence, the nation had set the National Pact as its target, and further commented as follows: *“Of course, we appreciate all the gains at Lausanne, but this does not prevent us from expressing some of the rights that were among our National Pact goals, that we believe we were so close to achieving with the victory in the War of Independence, but that we had to renounce at Lausanne.<sup>10</sup> Lausanne is not an unquestionable text; and it is not at all a sacred text, either. Of course, we will discuss it. Of course, we will make efforts to reach a better position.”* Erdoğan said that despite the incidents and changes that had taken place over the last century, attempts were being made to confine Turkey to Lausanne, but added that they would push the limits to ensure that Turkey attains its goals for 2023 and *“becomes one of the top 10 countries in every field”* (TCCB, 2018i).

In his speech on December 7, 2016, President Erdoğan said that there were people who were still trying to rule the world under the conditions of 1918; that these actors were making plans to seize Turkey’s possessions, let alone giving back what it deserved; and that the developments in Syria and Iraq should be seen as attempts to complete the projects left unfinished in 1918. He added that Turkey today was not the same Turkey as in 1918, and that it was endeavoring to retain its gains and assess what it had lost. In his speech, Erdoğan defined the struggle under the current conditions and in the future by paraphrasing the statements made by Mustafa Kemal: *“What was the slogan of the strategy that helped us win our War of Independence?.. ‘There is no defense line, but defense of the territory. This territory is the whole of the motherland’ ... Now we say that we will carry on our struggle in every field, from the fight against terrorism to the economy, from foreign policy to investments... This territory is no longer limited to the borders of our homeland, but our region and the whole world”* (TCCB, 2018j).

It stirred the attention of Greece that for the first time in the history of the Republic, the Treaty of Lausanne was being discussed at the top level of the Turkish State following July 15. Greece reacted to this, seeking to protect the status quo in the context of its own foreign policy gains, and this reflex became the focus of its foreign policy assessments and moves. Turkey made efforts to shape a new agenda with an innovative and solution-oriented attitude in the context of its own position and future perspective, and it could be considered that the two countries are once again facing the issues that remained unresolved at Lausanne.

### **3. Repercussions of the Lausanne Discussions on International Relations: Lausanne Tension between Turkey and Greece**

The tension between Turkey and Greece escalated once again when Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos visited Goat Island on March 7, 2017, at a time when the ardent discussions in Turkey had abated, and inspected the Greek soldiers, accompanied by military officials, at the castle area of the island where military activities were carried out (Olay, 2018). In a statement on March 8, 2017 regarding the initiatives of Greece, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted: *“... Attempting to corrode and even disregard*

<sup>10</sup> In another speech, Erdoğan similarly said: *“The era in which we live is as important as the War of Independence. It is so critical that it will lead to severe consequences. Following World War I, the powers of the time were planning to confine Turkey to a small territory in Central Anatolia according to the Treaty of Sèvres ... Our War of Independence was the answer given by our nation to this scenario ... Even though we could not attain all of the National Pact goals, we managed to make the Treaty of Sèvres a useless piece of paper. Today, we are facing the unnamed threat of Sèvres again”* (TCCB, 2018l).



*the demilitarized status of the Aegean islands granted by international treaties by taking shelter behind an imaginary Turkish threat and interpreting the Charter of the United Nations conveniently is an approach that is suited to those that are living in an alternative reality, and cannot be considered politically prudent” (MFA, 2018c).*

In the same period, newspapers published news claiming that “a militia force of 40, and the 40 commandos in the resident troop had conducted a military drill using real bullets on the Farmakonisi Island of Greece, located 6.10 miles from Turkey” (Mynet, 2018), and that the Greek President Pavlopoulos had visited the Greek Military Bases on Farmakonisi Island and Donkey Island on July 18, 2017 and the Greek Military Base on Sheep Island the next day (Sözcü, 2018).

The problem between the two parties in the Aegean Sea is related to the potential impacts of the territorial waters of the 152 islands, islets and rocks, defined as “geographical formations” by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the sovereignty of which is controversial in regards to the allocation of Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf in the future. The result that is sought by Greece is that it owns the Aegean Sea unilaterally, pushing Turkey eastward. In fact, it was Şükrü Kaya from the island of Kos (Minister of Interior in the 1930s) who, for the first time, realized this ambiguous situation relating to the geographical formations, the sovereignty of which was controversial. Kaya suggested to Marshal Çakmak that flags be planted on the islets close to Turkey, but Çakmak replied: “Will you drag us into a war with Greece and Italy?” Despite Çakmak’s negative answer, Kaya sent officials to the islets and rocks and had them leave their mark, but this initiative was not pursued later (Gürdeniz, 2017, 179-181). It is known that Greece names these islands, islets and rocks of which the sovereignty is controversial “Gray Zones”. In a statement by Yorgo Papandreu, published in the *Ethnos* newspaper on October 9, 2006 relating to Kardak and other similar islets: “I believe we have reached a point where we can agree on a solution in which Turkey will withdraw its requests regarding the ‘gray zones’ question”. However, Greek President Pavlopoulos rejected this concept on October 20, 2017 noting: “There are no gray zones in the Aegean Sea. Everyone must understand this ... I do not know when and how they invented this, but it is better they forget about this, as otherwise there will be no possibility of good friendship or neighborliness. Nor will there be a route to the European Union. We will, in under no terms, tolerate the questioning of the Treaty of Lausanne, and this will not be left unanswered” (Gürdeniz, 2017, 521-522).

Erdoğan, the first President to visit Greece in 65 years after the visit by Celal Bayar in 1952, said in an interview with Greek channel Skai TV on December 6, 2017, prior to the official visit to Greece, that international treaties should be updated over time, that the Treaty of Lausanne required such an update, and that he laid emphasis on the subject because he aimed at strengthening the friendship and security of the two countries. Erdoğan further noted that this update could be made after a thorough consideration of the issue, and thus particularly the crises concerning islands that break out from time to time could be resolved. He also added, “... there were problems with the measurements regarding airspace, territorial waters and the continental shelf” that made it almost impossible for Turkish ships to travel in the Aegean Sea, and that aircraft often came face-to-face with each other, escalating tensions (Milliyet, 2018b).

In the first stage of his historical visit, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, responding to the statement by Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos that there was no need to update the Treaty of Lausanne and that the borders were drawn unquestionably by this treaty, said, referring to some of the problems experienced by Muslim Turks: “...We say the Treaty of Lausanne is in effect. That means, it is not in effect. We have to discuss in detail the applicability of the treaty. Political law contains provisions regarding the updating of treaties” (Milliyet, 2018e). Following this meeting, Erdoğan met with the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, and said in response to Tsipras’s statement that the Treaty of Lausanne would not be updated: “The Treaty of Lausanne is not merely a treaty between Turkey and Greece. It is a treaty to which 11 countries are party. Japan, the UK, France are among them. Does it involve only the Aegean Sea? Isn’t there anything that is not related to the Aegean Sea in it? What about the rights of the minorities in Western Thrace? How can we secure the rights of such minorities through this treaty? In any case, the responsibility to investigate and protect such rights rests with the Greek administration” (Milliyet, 2018f).

In a statement on this issue, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu<sup>11</sup> emphasized that the Peace Treaty of Lausanne could be updated, but that the contracting states must agree on it. He added that the problem concerning the treaty arose from the islands, the sovereignty of which was not clear; the Aegean continental shelf; territorial waters; and ‘flight information region’ issues. Çavuşoğlu also stated that some provisions of the treaty were not enforced, giving the example of Western Thrace Turks, who are not allowed to use the word “Turk” in any organization (MFA, 2018a).

<sup>11</sup> Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu took office on August 29, 2014 and is still the Foreign Minister of Turkey.



CHP Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu made the following statement regarding the Lausanne discussion that had become a hot topic again with Erdoğan's visit to Greece: "According to the Treaty of Lausanne, the minorities in Turkey can elect their own leaders. It is quite natural and it is stated in the treaty that the Turks in Greece are entitled to elect their religious leaders. Turkey complies with this requirement, but Greece does not ... This is in our democratic culture. Accordingly, Greece must comply with the resolutions of the European Court of Human Rights... Unfortunately, the chief mufti of the Muslims are not elected by the imams and clerics there. How can we say that the Treaty of Lausanne is in effect? This means that it is not in effect" (Hürriyet, 2018d).

In a statement he made to a newspaper published in Greece after his meetings with the Prime Minister Tsipras and President Pavlopoulos, President Erdoğan said the following with respect to the Peace Treaty of Lausanne: "The Peace Treaty of Lausanne is the fundamental agreement governing our relations with Greece and some other countries. Turkey observes and respects the Treaty of Lausanne as well as all other treaties and liabilities that arises from it... On the other hand, we are facing other issues, problems, misapplications from time to time... Today's conditions differ from the conditions, problems and solution methods that existed 94 years ago. We must analyze the spirit of our time well and adapt ourselves to the changing conditions... In this framework, we want to build our friendship and cooperation in accordance with the spirit and letter of a fundamental agreement like the Treaty of Lausanne." Erdoğan went on to state that the Turkish minorities resident in Western Thrace should enjoy "the relevant rights and freedoms under the international treaties, resolutions of the European Court of Human Rights and contemporary international norms," as well as the rights of identity, education and religious freedom, confirming that Turkey "has provided the Greek minority with significant initiatives related to their rights and freedoms", and that "new schools, from kindergarten to high school, have been opened in Gökçeada (Imbros), despite the small number of minority students". He also emphasized that Cyprus could not be considered a Greek island, and that unless the Greek side "undergoes a change of mentality focused on political equality of the Cyprian Turks", no solution will be reached. Erdoğan noted that a problem exists related to the restriction of maritime jurisdictions in the Aegean Sea, along with some other problems, and stressed that permanent and sustainable solutions needed to be developed "with an approach that protects the rights and interests of both parties" (TCCB, 2018t).

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Hakan Çavuşoğlu stated that there were four reasons behind Erdoğan's request to update the Treaty of Lausanne that had been mentioned during his visit to Greece, one of which related to education: "There are bilingual primary schools in Western Thrace, but problems have been experienced for years with regard to the admission of books sent from Turkey. Kindergarten has been made mandatory in Greece, but children of Muslim and Turkish families are forced to go to Greek kindergartens, as no bilingual kindergartens have been established... You make it mandatory for a 6-year-old child to go to kindergarten where the practices of the dominant culture and Christian rituals are applied. This is not required under any international instrument, let alone the Treaty of Lausanne". Çavuşoğlu noted the second reason related to ethnic identity as: "In 1927, the İskeçe Turkish Association was established in İskeçe (Xanthi), and likewise, the Gümülcine (Komotini) Turkish Youth Association was established in 1929. Pursuant to a resolution of the governor, their nameplates were removed in 1985. The minority residents there have been engaged in a legal struggle since then. The ECHR decided against Greece in 2008, but the decision was not enforced. A law was enacted in September, upon which all hell broke loose in Greece. Then, they withdrew the law." Thirdly, Çavuşoğlu mentioned the problems relating to religious freedoms: "Muftis were appointed by election until 1985, after which they were no longer elected, but appointed by the general administration. The mufti's office is a symbol of unity, solidarity, religion and everything there. As per the '240 imams law', a commission in which there is not even a single Muslim appoints clerics to our mosques. How is that even possible?" Fourthly, Çavuşoğlu brought up the foundations question, saying: "Under the Treaty of Lausanne, the costs of religious, social and educational activities of the Turkish minority are covered by the revenues of the foundations. The foundations are managed by muftis. If you elect and appoint a certain kind of man as a mufti, then it means you fetter the religious freedom of the minority. In Turkey, foundation property was returned, and compensation was paid for the property that could not be returned. They have complained about the lack of elections in foundations since 2013. Ok, we will do it, because the non-Muslim Greek minority residents here are our citizens; this is how we consider them. They are equal citizens. We do not consider it burdensome and we are not lacking in self-confidence. The minority community there does not know which foundation brings what from where, what was sold to whom, or whether it was sold or not. They do not know anything about the foundation property that is necessary for them to support and carry on their religious, social and educational lives" (Milliyet, 2018g). It would seem that all of these questions and discussions will remain as hot topics in the forthcoming period. Since it is known that the sensitivity about Western Thrace from national, moral and humanistic perspectives is at maximum level in Turkey, the Government is able to address such issues with a higher level of self-confidence than previous governments.

## Conclusion and Assessment





The Treaty of Lausanne what described as the title deed of Turkey has been the subject of discussions for the first time in Turkish political life at the level of head of state. At the beginning of these discussions, the coup attempt of July 15, 2016 played a major role. It was adopted as an attack on the presence of Turkey. The struggle against the coup attempt is defined as the Second War of Independence. Success that could not be achieved in Lausanne after the first war should be achieved after the second war was Erdoğan's message that has given to internal and external public opinion. The National Pact and the New Turkey Ideal are two goals that have been put forward by Erdoğan as the ways to reach achieve. These opinions have received high-level reactions from internal and external public opinion. It was the beginning of a new tension between Turkey and Greece.

The Treaty of Lausanne is still of paramount importance for Turkey's national existence, security, independence, freedom and future, and this importance is not something that prevents us from addressing it in its historical depth and with its unknown aspects. As a matter of fact, no treaty in history is enforced indefinitely, and it is of vital importance for the vision and future of Turkey to review the issue in the light of the new conditions and current international developments with a multidimensional brainstorming. Considering that there are five years left until the Turkish Republic celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the significance and urgency of this issue can be far better understood. There is no doubt that it will be very useful to address and discuss the issues relating to the Treaty of Lausanne in every aspect, equitably, factually and consistently, without giving way to paranoia. Although Erdoğan's approach meets with reactions both in Turkey and international arena, it must also be stated that this approach should be subjected of nonreactive evaluations.

It would seem to be more meaningful to attribute the recent reappearance of the Lausanne question by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the first President of the Republic of Turkey to be elected directly by the people, to his desire to include the nation's requests and choices in the process, rather than his personal political goals. Furthermore, the revision of an international treaty that was concluded under the political, economic and military conditions of the time, to address the matters in dispute, and its adaptation to the actual circumstances and reality, have already been on an inevitable route.

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