

**Strategies in Flux:
The Eastern Front During the 'Nationalist Struggle' in 'Turkey,' 1919-1920**

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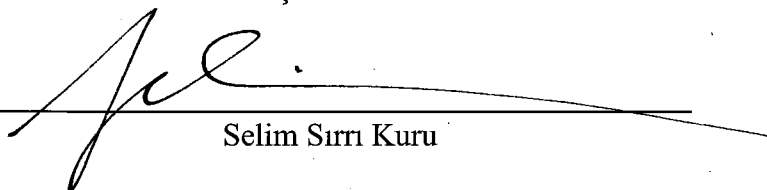
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Abstract

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Neither Mustafa Kemal nor the rest of the nationalist leaders had a clear-cut strategy of how to 'save the state' upon their arrival to Anatolia. In order to answer the question of how and why the nationalist leaders ended up with a militarist strategy, this study looks at both domestic and international configuration of power relations in the context of Eastern Anatolia. I demonstrate that the nationalist leaders evaluated three different strategies: the American mandate; the Bolshevik solution, and armed resistance without an offensive. I also argue that despite this state of flux in strategy formulation, one could identify a movement towards a more hawkish strategy. I conclude by arguing that the nationalist leadership, from the very beginning, was dependent on the military not only for organizational reasons, but also for its survival. This dependency led them to adopt the militarist strategy.

Introduction

“On the 19th day of May 1919, I landed on Samsun.”¹ This is how Mustafa Kemal,² the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, starts his account of the ‘nationalist, independence struggle’ in his famous Nutuk (The Speech). Written years after the establishment of the Republic, Nutuk presents this date as the start of the struggle.³ This is definitely not a random choice. Mustafa Kemal argues that he had a clear vision of how to ‘save the nation’ when he had landed in Samsun.⁴ He kept this as a ‘national secret’ throughout the struggle, and directed the movement according to his blueprint.⁵ This study aims to challenge this argument. I will argue that the strategy of how to ‘save the nation and the state’ changed throughout the

¹ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk v.1* (Istanbul 2000), p.1.

² Mustafa Kemal (Paşa) Atatürk. (1881-1938). Graduated from the military academy in 1904. After trying to found his secret committee, he joined the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) when he was posted to Macedonia in 1907. Member of the inner circle of Unionist officers. Gained fame through his defense of the Anafarta front in the Gallipoli campaign. Promoted to brigadier (and made a paşa) in 1916. Ended the war in command of the Syrian front. Returned to the capital and tried to establish himself in politics without success. Launched as the head of the *national* resistance movement in Anatolia, when the government appointed him inspector of the Third Army. (See Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement* (Leiden: 1984) for the argument that Mustafa Kemal was launched as the nationalist leader by the Unionists.) Elected president of the representative committee of the Defense of Rights organization at the regional congress in Erzurum and at the *national* congress in Sivas in September 1919. From April 1920 onwards president of the *national* assembly in Ankara. Later, the first president of the Turkish Republic (1923). (All italics mine.) Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London, New York: 1997), pp. 370-371.

³ He clearly states this in Atatürk, *Nutuk v.1*, pp.12-13.

⁴ “It was necessary to engage in an armed confrontation and resistance as a nation against anybody whoever was attacking the Turkish fatherland and Turkish independence.” *ibid.* p.14. This was the only solution for salvation according to Mustafa Kemal, as he presents it in Nutuk.

⁵ Following from the sentence that was quoted in the previous footnote: “It would not be appropriate to manifest the requirements of this decision in the very beginning. It was necessary to divide the application into different phases, to prepare the feelings and thoughts of the nation, and to reach the goal by advancing step by step... The general direction that we had followed from the first day on, never diverged from the path that was set by the initial decision.” *ibid.* pp.14-15. Mustafa Kemal continues on p.16: “I was obliged to carry the capacity of development, which I sensed in the nation’s conscience and future, as a *national secret* in my conscience to apply it step by step to our social condition.” (Italics original).

struggle and having a strategy did not usually mean its implementation. By looking at the Eastern Front from July 1919 to September 1920, I will show that the leadership considered many strategies and the decisions were subject to reversals and alterations.

The strategy that Mustafa Kemal supposedly had prior to his arrival in Samsun, was a militarist solution to the Entente occupation: The only solution for 'saving the nation' was organized and armed reprisal.⁶ By focusing on a specific region and a time period, I will show that *American mandate, Bolshevik solution, and armed resistance without an offensive* were alternative strategies that the leadership seriously considered. I will argue that the militarist strategy was chosen through negotiations, bargainings, and co-optations between many social and political actors, including the Centralist Struggle Movement (CSM)⁷, which was led by Mustafa Kemal. When Mustafa Kemal landed in Samsun, there were already many organizations and movements, which were looking for a solution to the problem. The existence of regional Defense of Rights organizations all over the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire can be a very good example. The CSM leadership had to take into account all these different ideas and solutions.

On September 20, 1920, The Eastern Army commanded by Kazım Karabekir Paşa⁸ started the offensive against the Armenian forces. Since there were other

⁶ See footnote 4.

⁷ The conventional name is Nationalist Struggle Movement, but I prefer this name. I explain the reasons in the following pages of the introduction.

⁸ Kazım Karabekir (Paşa). (1882-1948). Graduated from the military academy in 1905. Joined the CUP in Edirne in 1907. Had a purely military career, culminating in the command of the Caucasian Army Corps with the rank of brigadier in 1918. Appointed commander of the Ninth Army in eastern Anatolia in March 1919. His troops formed the backbone of the *national* resistance movement.

available strategies, why did the CSM end up with a militarist strategy in the Eastern Front? Examining the configuration of power relations at that period will indicate that the increased power of the CSM and the relative superiority of the military within the movement led the CSM leadership towards a militarist strategy.

One of my fundamental arguments is that the CSM leadership did not have a clear-cut strategy upon their arrival to Anatolia. This should not mean that they did not have any designs about the character of a new state, or the character of a reformed Ottoman state. Rather, they did not know how 'to save the state.' They did not have a clear-cut strategy against the advancing occupation. However, this should not distract us from looking for a pattern in their strategy-formulation. I will argue that the more the CSM leadership gained power against the rest of the social and political actors, the more it steered towards a hawkish strategy, whose ultimate end was the militarist solution.

My approach is a challenge to the nationalist historiography and its definitions. I will question terms such as fatherland, nation, etc. These notions imply some certain territorial and conceptual boundaries. What are the limits of the fatherland? Who is a member of the nation and who is not? The Turkish fatherland, and The Turkish nation are constructs, which owe their existence to certain historical processes. The answers to the questions, how the territorial borders were drawn, and how the "Turk" was defined, should be sought in the period that preceded the

Defeated the Armenians in 1920. Fell out with Mustafa Kemal over the latter's monopolization of power and founded the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) in 1924. Arrested and tried in connection with the Izmir conspiracy in 1926, but released. Lived in retirement until he re-entered the assembly after Atatürk's death in 1938. Elected president of the assembly in 1946. (*Italics mine*) Zürcher, *Turkey*, p.382.

establishment of the Republican Turkish state. A discussion of the strategies is extremely useful for that purpose because each strategy implied certain boundaries for the future state. The conceptual and territorial boundaries of the state that an American mandate implied were totally different from the ones that were implied by a militarist strategy. If an American mandate were realized, the Ottoman/Turkish state would be much less powerful under the control of the USA. In that case, there would be a united American mandate on Armenia and the Ottoman state and this would imply totally different territorial boundaries, which, in return would inevitably reflect itself in the conceptualization of 'the nation.' Showing the non-existence of a pre-determined strategy might provide valuable hints about the vague nature of the concepts such as the 'fatherland' and the 'nation.'⁹

My approach will be valuable for reaching conclusions about the character of the new state. The dependence on the military both for the formulation and the implementation of the militarist strategy certainly had some impacts on the new state's character. The autonomy of the military and ascendance of the ex-military figures in the young Turkish Republic throughout its early period (if not later periods) have its roots in such a dependency.

An in-depth analysis of how all the actors formulated their strategies is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, the influence of those groups and their strategies on the CSM and its strategies will be the concern. Those groups include,

⁹ Hasan Kayalı argues in his book, *Arabs and Young Turks*, that the centralization policies of the Ottoman state are usually mistaken for Turkification. He implies that "Turk" was not a clearly defined category at that period. See Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks, Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: 1997).

the Ottoman (legitimate) government in Istanbul, the British, American, and Bolshevik representatives, the local congress representatives of Eastern Anatolia, the anti-CSM movements and the Caucasian states. There were some other actors, which may be categorized as parts of this state-in-the-making: the decisions of the military and the civil bureaucrats certainly affected the center.

It is essential to define the Centralist Struggle Movement at this point. I chose the 'Centralist' instead of the conventional 'Nationalist,' when I defined the CSM because, in order to get away from the nationalist narrative of the Republican state, a careful use of the terms is vital. Even if the members themselves were using the term nationalist, I will abandon it because of its malleability. An implication that this study seeks to establish is that the boundaries of 'the nation' were not clear in these early phases of the movement. So replacing 'Nationalist' with 'Centralist' is more appropriate since it is unquestionable that the leaders were even some times paranoid about presenting themselves as the sole representative of the struggle movement. It also does not disable us in tracing the strategic changes of the leadership throughout the struggle like the other notion does, because as will become clearer, the strategies implied different boundaries but the desire to be the center never disappeared.

It is also important to discuss who constituted the CSM. Many scholars identify the military and the CSM leadership as the same actor. In other words, the CSM is perceived as a military movement. It is correct that almost all the members of the movement, who were participating in the decision-making processes, were from military origins. However, it is not appropriate to define the CSM as a military

movement. I see the leadership as a group of young military commanders who moved to Anatolia with the aim of 'saving the state.' They certainly came with a shared intellectual background, however their strategic decisions and that of the military commanders should be analyzed under analytically different categories.¹⁰ The military commanders were operating in their own localities, and they were facing different configurations of power relations. It might be argued that their goal was 'to save the state' as well. However, their strategies might be different than that of the CSM leadership, which I argue was the case.

The Eastern Front presents a perfect environment for understanding the nature of the decision-making processes of the CSM because many countries were posing a threat of occupation. This part of Asia Minor was threatened by Armenian, Greek, British, Georgian, and Russian occupation (or liberation). The most powerful standing units of the Ottoman Army, which were commanded by Kazım Karabekir, were in this region. Karabekir was supporting the CSM with all of his might, although he was still nominally loyal to the government in Istanbul, as an Ottoman Paşa. In addition, there were many civil bureaucrats in the region who were loyal to Istanbul, with varying degrees. Last but not least, the local congresses were very powerful in this region. All these points portray this region as an important model for reaching generalizations about the struggle.

¹⁰ A very symbolic example took place just after Mustafa Kemal had resigned from the military. On the second day of the Erzurum Congress (July 24, 1919), he was warned by one of the delegates that the chairman (Mustafa Kemal) should not have been wearing a military uniform. Next day, Mustafa Kemal was in a civilian outfit. This was Mustafa Kemal's first experience in democratic politics and his military background was directly challenged. Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (New York: 2000), p.239.

My analysis starts with the Erzurum Congress in July 1919. I perceived this date as important because this congress sought to unify the local congresses of the region. In addition, Mustafa Kemal and Rauf Orbay¹¹ joined this congress, which was one of their first publicized actions.¹² The analysis ends with the beginning of the offensive against the Armenian forces in September 1920. The reason for this choice is straightforward: the offensive means that the strategy is formulated and is in the process of implementation.

Part 1 is an elaboration of the theoretical framework of this study. The main references will be to Charles Tilly's theory on modern state formation and the state-in-society model of Joel Migdal. Part 2 is a brief historical background in which I describe the main historical events of 1919 and 1920, with focusing on the Eastern Front. In Part 3, I examine the alternative strategies in order to show that the CSM leadership seriously evaluated many strategies: namely, the American mandate, the Bolshevik solution, and armed resistance without an offensive. Part 4 is the heart of this study. I will be tracing the decision-making processes of the CSM leadership on the militarist strategy, which will be followed by the conclusion.

¹¹ Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay). (1881-1964). Naval officer, who became a national hero as commander of the cruiser Hamidiye in 1913. Served in the navy and as an Ottoman agent in Persia during First World War. Member of the Ottoman delegation in the Brest-Litovsk peace talks. Leader of the delegation which negotiated the armistice of Mudros. Went to Anatolia to organize *national* resistance in May 1919. Head of the nationalist group in the last Ottoman parliament (1920). Deported to Malta in 1920. After his return in 1922, commissar and prime minister of the nationalist government. From 1923 led the opposition in the PP (People's Party, later Republican People's Party) against Mustafa Kemal and Ismet. Founded PRP in 1924. Accused of being the brains behind the 1926 Izmir conspiracy. Sentenced to ten years (in absentia). Lived abroad until 1936. Ambassador in London, 1942-4. (Italics mine). Zürcher, *Turkey*, p.387.

¹² In Amasya, they published a circular about the need to resist and centralize.

Part I - Theoretical Framework

We can place the existing scholarship on state-society relations in Turkey on a continuum. On one end is the type of scholarship, which I call the structural/materialist. This framework, put very basically, tries to explain the state-society relations through analyzing the structural background of Turkey, e.g. the landholding patterns, changes in class powers and relations, taxation methods.¹³ On the other end of the spectrum is the type of scholarship, which I call the idealist. Again in very basic terms, this framework tries to explain the state-society relations through an analysis of the cultural background of Turkey, e.g. political culture, state tradition, ideological impact of the "West."¹⁴

The hardest choice for the social scientist is how to limit his/her explanatory framework. Limiting is unavoidable if the goal is to present an easy-to-grasp partial explanation of reality. In my case, I admit in the very beginning that both ends of the aforementioned spectrum help us explain reality. The ideal would be to create a framework that would use both of them, however it is beyond the scope of this type of a study.¹⁵ Rather, I locate my own framework closer to the first end in the

¹³ Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, London: 1994), Kemal Karpat, "Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (1972), Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (London, New York: 1987)

¹⁴ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London, New York: 1998), Metin Heper, *Türk Kamu Bürokrasisinde Gelenekçilik ve Modernleşme: Siyaset Sosyolojisi Açısından Bir İnceleme* (Istanbul: 1977), Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Northgate: 1985), Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: 1962), Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri, 1895-1908* (Ankara: 1964).

¹⁵ See for a perfect example on the Israeli case: Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: 1998).

spectrum with making an assumption that the effects of ideology and cultural background in decision-making increase when the power of the decision-makers increase vis-à-vis the other social and political forces. I neglect the effects of ideological and cultural background on the CSM leadership's strategic choices by saying that the period I am analyzing is very early in the state-making process so the desire for survival surpasses any other kind of intentions. In short, we can take this period as one in which material assumed more important roles than the ideal. By this kind of an approach, I also refrain from essentializing the ideological background of the CSM leadership. For example, as this study will indicate, nationalist ideology of the CSM did not crystallize, at least during the period that is analyzed here. The ideas are not sheltered from the material. Rather, continuous power struggles, inevitably transform ideas and ideologies.

This study presents a materialist interpretation of decision-making processes in a less structural way because one of my goals is to get away from frameworks, that try to reveal the traces of pre-determined, inevitable developments. Rather, I intend to analyze the struggles between different social and political actors by examining them in their own historical context. Such an effort will reveal that trying to fit those almost unique experiences into a universal, structural developmental framework is futile.

My study is strongly inspired by Karen Barkey's *Bandits and Bureaucrats*.¹⁶ Her interest is the Ottoman state-society relations, and state centralization in the 17th century. She summarizes her framework as 'a highly interactive analysis of social

¹⁶ Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*

structure and state action that charts out how various structures shape state action and how state behavior restructures society.¹⁷ Her method for describing the Ottoman path to centralization is to analyze the interactions between the social structure and the state. This, as Barkey herself mentions, resembles the method that Charles Tilly uses to explain European centralization in his *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*:¹⁸

[B]oth the resistance and the cooperation of knights, financiers, municipal officers, landlords, peasants, artisans, and other actors created and recreated state structure over the long run. Thus the class structure of the population that fell under the jurisdiction of a particular state significantly affected the organization of that state, and variations in class structure from one part of Europe to another produced systematic geographic differences in the character of states.

Although Tilly limits his discussion to the social classes, which closely resonates Barrington Moore in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*,¹⁹ his framework is very useful in analyzing state-society relations and state centralization. In short, the idea is to examine the social structure and the state's interaction with it in a given territory at a specific time period. In essence, it is this interaction that leads to different configurations of power relations, which create different life experiences. This discussion becomes more clear when we analyze the 'state-in-society model' of Joel Migdal.

One of the main underlying assumptions in Migdal's works is a somewhat economic understanding of life. He perceives the social as a group of arenas in which contestation over domination takes place. In other words, different social

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁸ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, Oxford: 1990), pp. 26-27.

¹⁹ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: 1967).

forces engage in different struggles with each other because each of them are seeking to control the lives of the same individuals for whatever reason they might have. This is the reason for continuous struggles in the social realm. He puts this very clearly in one of his latest works:²⁰ "In short, all societies have ongoing battles among groups pushing different versions of how people should behave." Granted that this is a simplification, I accept this way of perceiving the world as highly accurate and useful. The unit of analysis, which is 'groups pushing different versions of how people should behave,' enables us to examine a multiplicity of groups regardless of their origins, members, or size. A group is worth analysis as long as it has an impact on how others should behave.

There is more that such a unit of analysis can provide. Migdal's model presents a new way to perceive the state. The state, without any doubts, is one of the most important forces in creating domination, through history. For many, it is *the* dominating force. However, Migdal's framework helps us to disaggregate the state like the society. He argues that the state is not a monolithic entity, which exists homogenously in every part of the country and behaves consistently everywhere.²¹ Rather, the state should be seen as another social force, which inhabits various others. The agents of the state can be accomplishing what the center asks them to do, but the opposite may very well be the case. Fortunately, Migdal's model enables us to see

²⁰ Joel S. Migdal, "The State-in-Society Approach: A New Definition of the State and Transcending the Narrowly Constructed World of Rigor" in Joel S. Migdal, *State-in-Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: 2001).

²¹ Joel S. Migdal, 'The State in Society: An Approach to Struggles for Domination.' in *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, ed. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue. (Cambridge: 1994), pp.15-16.

this differentiation. It enables us to see the struggles of domination, which takes in the state mechanism itself, in addition to getting away from the notion of an omnipotent state. In summary, what he offers is an interactive model in which the state is another social force that fights for domination, but more importantly the different components of the state can be analyzed when they diverge from the intentions of the center.

The last important point to mention is Migdal's notion of 'arenas of struggle.' As a corollary to disaggregating the state and the society, we can deduce that the struggles of domination are not for once and for all. The struggle is a continuous process and always depends upon the changing power relations between the social forces that are involved. 'The state' can be the dominating force in a specific arena but this does not necessitate that it will be so all the time or so in the other arenas. Rather, the aim should be to see what the nature of the struggles is and how these struggles are affecting the forces that are involved.²²

The multiple arenas of society and the interactions among them have been the cauldrons within which the contingent, particular historical outcomes have been brewed for each society and its state. The form of the state (democracy or some other type of government), its goals, its capabilities, its scope, its domination by particular social forces or its autonomy, as well as the form, systems of meaning, capabilities, and autonomy of other social forces – all these have been determined through these critical struggles and accommodations in the multiple arenas of society and the relationships among arenas.

In short, focusing on these multiple arenas of struggle is the best way to understand the patterns of domination, of how to behave in a certain context at a specific time period.

²² Ibid., p.29.

Inspiring from Barkey and Tilly, and borrowing heavily from Migdal, my goal will be to analyze the changing configuration of power relations in Anatolia of 1919-1920. I am hesitant to assign a name like modern state-formation as Barkey and Tilly do. This term is really tricky in the Ottoman/Turkish case. Many scholars point at the Tanzimat (Reformation) Era of the 19th century as the beginning of the modern-state formation. Some others like Barkey take it back to the 17th century. This confusion is aggravated by the desire of the Turkish Republic to detach itself from the Ottoman legacy to present itself as the defender of modernity.

Many scholars, like Erik Zürcher, pointed at the continuities between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.²³ However, it is also impossible to neglect the major changes that a transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic had brought. My intention in this study is to stay away from the discussion on modern state-formation. Rather, I see this period as part of a long, and continuous process of increased state centralization, which can be traced through the increased struggles over domination in multiple arenas of society. This also implies that I refrain from assigning certain pre-determined tasks to the founders of the new state. As Çağlar Keyder argues, the pre-WWI period was one in which there were many alternatives for the future, e.g. to continue with a multi-ethnic empire or to seek an ethnically homogeneous state.²⁴ One of my goals is to show that many choices, including the continuation of the empire and the formation of a nation-state, were evaluated by the CSM leaders, as well. So rather than defining this period as modern

²³ Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*

²⁴ Çağlar Keyder, "The Ottoman Empire." In *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark Von Hagen. (Boulder, Oxford: 1997).

state-formation, I use the aforementioned analytical tools to analyze a moment in the continuous process of constant struggle, with its implications.

A discussion of warfare constitutes the most important part of this study. In order to present this, I will start with discussing how Tilly sees the importance of warfare.²⁵ Put in very basic terms, Tilly argues that increased centralization of the state brought increased power to conscript soldiers and collect tax from the people. This, in turn, resulted in increased warfare capabilities for that state. The other states, for the basic cause of survival, were forced to match the capabilities of that state, which was only possible by similar increases in centralization. So, Tilly argues, warfare was the driving force for the states to become more centralized, hence modern national states. Broadly speaking, increased centralization and intervention into daily lives of the people were essential to increase military capabilities. Tilly's approach led many scholars to analyze the war making abilities of states and see how they affected the state-society relations. Works of Karen Barkey and Virginia Aksan are very good examples in the Ottoman context.²⁶ This interpretation, also, is extremely useful for my own case, in which the CSM leadership was facing both internal and external military assaults, and was forced to extract more resources from the society to keep up with warfare.

Tilly, taking for granted that warfare is the driving force for increased centralization, moves one step further by stating that the type of the new state

²⁵ See Tilly, *Coercion*, ch.3 for the following statements in the paragraph about Tilly's arguments.

²⁶ Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*. Virginia Aksan, "Locating the Ottomans among Early Modern Empires," *Journal of Early Modern History* 3(1999), 1-32.

depended upon the social structure since that structure affected the state's success in extracting more resources from the society:²⁷

War and preparation for war involved rulers in extracting the means of war from others who held the essential resources – men, arms, supplies, or money to buy them – and who were reluctant to surrender them without strong pressure or compensation. Within limits set by the demands and rewards of other states, extraction and struggle over the means of war created the central organizational structures of states. The organization of major social classes within a state's territory, and their relations to the state, significantly affected the strategies rulers employed to extract resources, the resistance they met, the struggle that resulted, the sorts of durable organization that extraction and struggle laid down, and therefore the efficiency of resource extraction.

The variations between the resistances that the states faced on their way to extract more resources from the society determined the organizational differences they have.²⁸ If the state faced resistance in a specific realm, then the bureaucracy dealing with that realm expanded and assumed more roles. Very broadly speaking, he explains the differences between European state-formation experiences through this hypothesis. An example that he uses constitutes the backbone of this study. He argues that 'military forces ended up playing a larger and more autonomous part in national politics' where war making was the most important issue and the other parts of the state did not face great resistance in extracting resources (e.g. taxation), protecting their constituencies, or dealing with the internal foes.²⁹ This statement supports the main argument of this study that the CSM leadership moved towards a more militarist strategy because that strategy was supported by the military on which the leadership was dependent for war making against both the external and internal foes. The importance that the military bureaucracy assumed during the struggle,

²⁷ Tilly, *Coercion*, p.15

²⁸ Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: 1985), pp.183-184.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.184.

which was not seen in any other part of the state mechanism, explains the ascendancy, and the autonomy of the military in early Republican Turkish politics.

An overall analysis of state activities and relationships, as Tilly's theory requires, is beyond the scope of a study like this. My intention is to show that the state elites faced the highest degrees of resistance in the war making activities. War making was essential not only because of the increased enemy attacks, but more importantly for defeating internal foes. For example, extracting resources did not face much resistance, since the Grand National Assembly (GNA) sufficed with directing the existing sources of income to itself. As Alptekin Müderrisoğlu argues, most of the income that was flowing from various parts of Anatolia to Istanbul was re-directed to Ankara.³⁰ So, a powerful state apparatus that deals with resource extraction did not need to develop. However, the tremendous need for war making necessitated the development of a powerful military bureaucracy, which had a strong say in any kind of decision-making.

A similar argument can be found in Migdal's framework. His model is a very interactive one, which helps us to trace the transformations that both the state and the rest of the social forces experience due to their struggles over domination. Migdal also suggests some hints about the outcomes of those struggles in various arenas. In an earlier article, where he presents a preliminary comparative framework for state

³⁰ Alptekin Müderrisoğlu, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Mali Kaynakları*, v.1, (Istanbul: 1988), pp.283-288.

crystallization, or consolidation of state power, he puts forward a hypothesis, which is essential for the purposes of this essay:³¹

[T]he distinctive character of a state derives, at least partially, from particular defeats, compromises, and accommodations, which depended upon the various strength of opponents... The particular strength of oppositional forces...will later reflect itself in state weakness in a particular realm of rulemaking and rule application.

This hypothesis closely resonates that of Tilly. In short, a defeat of the state will lead to weakness in that arena for the future. With the same token, a success will lead to strength in that arena for the future. I take that hypothesis further by disaggregating the state as Migdal advises. When the success in a specific arena is the issue, the inner relations in the state mechanism should be analyzed as well. I argue that state's success in some arenas lead to an overall increase in state's domination and power, however if that success is achieved with a heavy reliance upon a single part of the state apparatus, then that part gains power vis-à-vis the center. I will show in this study that the CSM was successful against many other social forces in multiple arenas, and this resulted in increased CSM power in those arenas, however a strong dependence on military to achieve those successes led to increased power of the military vis-à-vis the CSM leadership.

³¹ Joel S. Migdal, "The Crystallization of the State and the Struggles over Rulemaking: Israel in Comparative Perspective." in *The Israeli State & Society: Boundaries & Frontiers*, ed. Baruch Kimmerling (New York: 1989), p.5.

Part II - Historical Background

Anatolia was a place of total chaos, in the post-WWI period. Although the remaining parts of the empire did not experience direct occupation except for Eastern Anatolia, the impact of long years of war on Asia Minor was total devastation. The Balkan wars and the WWI had caused many demographic and economic casualties. Grief, anger, and fear were the feelings that many people shared. However, the best term that can define the situation in Anatolia after WWI was uncertainty.

On October 30, 1918 the armistice treaty between the Entente powers and the Ottoman state was signed at Mudros. The Ottoman representative that signed the treaty was Minister of Marine Rauf Bey, who as we will see, was a very important figure in the Anatolian movement. As a requirement of the armistice, the military started to demobilize. All the commanders, including Mustafa Kemal, Ali Fuat,³² and Kazım Karabekir were returning to Istanbul to see the capital occupied with Entente battleships. It was a very frustrating scene for them after serving for so long in the Ottoman military. In the meantime, the government in Istanbul had been replaced and most of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)³³ leaders had fled the

³² Ali Fuat Paşa (Cebesoy). (1882-1968). Classmate and closest friend of Mustafa Kemal at the military academy. Member of CUP, but followed a purely military career. Made a brigadier (and hence a paşa) in 1918. Sent to Anatolia as early in 1919, where he became one of the resistance leaders and the member of the national assembly. Commander of the western front (1919-1920). Sent to Moscow as nationalist envoy (1920-1921). One of the founders of the opposition PRP in 1924. Arrested after the Izmir conspiracy in 1926 but released. Was reconciled with Atatürk before the latter's death and took up a seat in the assembly again. Minister of public works (1939-43). President of the assembly (1947-50). Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 378-379.

³³ The party that took control after the 1908 Constitutional Revolution. Eliminated all the rivals before WWI. Its leaders, Enver, Cemal, and Talat Paşas are seen as the main cause for entering the WWI. See

country. A transition of power from the CUP to the opposition party, Committee of Liberty and Entente (CLE),³⁴ was in progress. Simultaneously, the Sultan was trying to find ways to increase his power.³⁵

Mustafa Kemal and the other military commanders were searching for a position in Istanbul. Without being able to do so, they returned back to their positions in Anatolia or tried to be appointed to such posts. Following Ali Fuat and Karabekir, Mustafa Kemal was able to find a position as the Inspector-General of the 9th (later 3rd) Army Corps in Anatolia. He landed in Samsun, on May 19, 1919 just four days after the Greek occupation of Izmir. He met at Amasya with Ali Fuat and Rauf to send around the Amasya Circular on June 22, which was calling for a national congress to meet in Sivas to initiate the 'nationalist' struggle. Later on, he moved to Erzurum with Rauf, upon Karabekir's request to join the regional Erzurum Congress as an ex-military commander who was forced to resign. One month later, they were attending the congress in Sivas. Mustafa Kemal was elected as the chairman in both of the congresses.

In the meantime, Paris Peace Conference met in May-June 1919, where a full or partial American mandate over Armenia and Ottoman lands were discussed. In addition, the Italian demands over the empire were neglected by the rest of the Entente powers, so a conclusion for a peace treaty was not reached at that conference.

Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914* (Oxford: 1969) for an extended analysis.

³⁴ The main opposition party against the CUP. Represented a liberal and religious-conservative alliance against the monopolization of power by the CUP. Came to power after the WWI.

³⁵ This is the main argument in Sina Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri ve Milli Mücadele* v.1, (Ankara: 1998).

In the Caucasus, forces of General Denikin, who was commanding the pro-Czar White Army, were retreating because of increased pressure from the Bolshevik Red Army. It was clear towards the end of 1919 that Denikin was losing. The British were scared about losing the oil reserves in the Caucasus to the Bolsheviks; however, they did not have the military capability to defend the region against the Red Army. Their solution was to recognize the new, independent Caucasian states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to use them as a set against Bolshevik expansion. However, this set could not resist the overwhelming Bolshevik power.

In the meantime, Damat Ferit Paşa³⁶ cabinet was in power in Istanbul. He was trying to confront the Anatolian movement before it posed a more serious threat. The CSM leadership responded to this challenge by stopping the communication with the Istanbul government following the Sivas Congress. The cabinet was forced to leave office after a couple of weeks. This granted a relative publicity and legitimacy to the CSM. They started to play an important role in the governmental affairs in Istanbul. They convinced the new government to gather the Ottoman parliament, which eventually met on January 12, 1920. The CSM was significantly represented in this last Ottoman parliament, and Rauf, himself, was heading this group. Under their leadership, the parliament announced Misak-ı Milli (the National Pact) on February 17, which (vaguely) drew the borders of the empire that was facing occupation. These maneuvers of the CSM in the parliament led the Entente powers to react by

³⁶ Damat ('Imperial son-in-law') Ferit Paşa. (1853-1923). Ottoman diplomat and statesman. Married a daughter of Sultan Abdülhamit. Member of the Council of State. Made a paşa in 1888. Entered the senate in 1908. Leading member of the Committee of Liberty and Entente (CLE). Five times grand vizier after 1918. His policies were pro-British and anti-nationalist, hence he had to leave Turkey in 1923 and died in exile in Nice. Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 377-378.

officially occupying Istanbul. Some MPs, including Rauf, were arrested and purged to Island of Malta. This constituted a precursor for the CSM leadership to call for a new parliament in Ankara. The Grand National Assembly (GNA) started its meetings with members from the last Ottoman parliament and also with newly elected members on April 23, 1920.

One of the first tasks of the cabinet in Ankara was to send representatives to Moscow. They hoped to gain Bolshevik support against the British and the French, since they were the common enemy. The idea to attack the Armenian forces was evaluated with these lenses. The CSM leadership was not willing to risk a possible Bolshevik support with such an act. However, the 15th Army Corps started an offensive against the Armenian forces on September 20, 1920, before an agreement with the Bolsheviks was reached.

Part III – The Search for a Strategy

“The only possible solution for surviving without dividing the country seems to be giving hand to an American supervision.” From İsmet Bey’s³⁷ letter to Kazım Karabekir. (August 27, 1919)³⁸

The CSM leadership considered different strategies before deciding to initiate an offensive against the Armenian forces in the Eastern Front. I will mention three strategies: the American mandate, the Bolshevik solution, and armed resistance without an offensive. Although Mustafa Kemal argues in Nutuk that he had the clear vision of a solution upon his arrival to Samsun on May 1919, it is apparent that all these strategies were seriously evaluated by the CSM leadership. Yet, this state of flux in strategy formulation should not distract us from seeing the pattern in the search for a strategy. Through time, the CSM leadership had a more powerful position in the changing configuration of power relations, and this reflected itself in the move towards a more hawkish strategy.

The American Mandate

The calls for an American mandate reached to its highest levels, during the Sivas Congress. These calls inevitably affected the CSM, and forced the leadership

³⁷ İsmet (Bey, later Paşa) (İnönü) (1884-1973). Graduated from the military academy in 1906. Joined the CUP while serving in Edirne in 1907. Served as Chief of Staff under Mustafa Kemal Paşa on the eastern front in 1916. Worked for the *nationalist* underground while serving at the war office in 1919-1920. Moved to Ankara in April 1920. Was appointed the commander of the western front in 1921. Led the Turkish delegation at the peace negotiations in Lausanne. First prime minister of the republic (1923-24). Succeeded Atatürk as president of the republic (1938-50). (*Italics mine*). Zürcher, *Turkey*, p.381.

³⁸ Kazım Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.1 (Istanbul: 2000), pp.424-427.

to adjust their position accordingly. In the end, this strategy was abandoned but its serious evaluation by the CSM leadership is worth consideration.

During the Paris Peace Conference in May-June 1919, the idea of an American mandate on various parts of the Ottoman Empire found a firm base. British Prime Minister Lloyd George offered different versions to President Wilson: an overall mandate on the entire Ottoman lands, and a mandate on Istanbul and Armenia.³⁹ These offers certainly created many alternative scenarios both in Armenia and the Ottoman Empire. Especially in Istanbul, many intellectuals and bureaucrats started to see an American mandate as the best solution.⁴⁰ These views had their impacts on Erzurum and Sivas Congresses, which took place just after the cessation of the Paris Conference.

The ongoing debate on the American mandate affected the Erzurum Congress, but not to the extent that it did the Sivas Congress. The nature of the Erzurum Congress may be the apparent reason. This was a regional congress and the main concerns were creating a strong regional solidarity against a probable Armenian offensive.⁴¹ The decisions of the congress reflect these concerns.⁴² However, the seventh clause is worth consideration. With this clause, the congress 'welcomes any technical, industrial, and economic help from any country, which is respectful to

³⁹ Mine Erol, *Türkiye'de Amerikan Mandası Meselesi, 1919-1920* (Giresun: 1972), p.14.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 41, p.53.

⁴¹ These concerns can be understood better through an analysis of the historical background of the region, especially the deportations and massacres that the Ottoman Armenians of the region faced in 1915. For an extended analysis see Fikret Adanır, "Armenian Deportations and Massacres in 1915" in *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences and Possible Solutions*, ed. Daniel Chirot and Martin Seligman (Washington DC: 2000), Taner Akçam, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* (Istanbul: 1992), Gwynne Dwyer, "Turkish Falsifiers and Armenian Deceivers: Historiography and the Armenian Massacres," *Middle Eastern Studies* 12 (1976), pp. 99-107.

⁴² Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.1, pp.286-289.

national principles within the borders (that was vaguely mentioned in the previous clause) and which does not have any tendencies towards occupation.' One can hardly see a call for an American mandate in this clause, but it will become clearer during the analysis of the Sivas Congress that this clause reflects a search for the most useful strategy. Although, it does not openly call for a mandate, it certainly does not dismiss the discussion.

The concerns of the leadership are reflected in a telegram that Mustafa Kemal, Kazım Karabekir, Rauf (Orbay), Hüsrev (Gerede) and Colonel Kazım (Dirik)⁴³ sent to Kara Vasıf⁴⁴ via Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) Paşa.⁴⁵ They informed Ali Fuat that an elaborate and careful analysis of the American mandate or 'backing up'⁴⁶ was essential. They argued that supporting American help could be beneficial with the condition that independence and sovereignty were not threatened. This telegram shows that the leadership did not even need any pro-mandate representatives in the congress to bring up the topic. Perhaps they hesitated, considering that some American mandate scenarios included some parts of Eastern Anatolia in a greater Armenia.

⁴³ Kazım (Dirik). (1881-1941). Turkish general. Held the rank of Colonel when he became chief of staff of Mustafa Kemal's mission in Anatolia in May 1919. Took part in War of Independence as corps commander and director of transport. Governor of Izmir in 1926 when the attempt on Mustafa Kemal's life was uncovered, he continued in the post until 1935, when he was appointed Inspector-General of Thrace. Mango, *Atatürk*, p.548.

⁴⁴ Kara ('Black') Vasıf. (1872-1931). Graduated from the war academy in 1903. Rose to the rank of colonel, commanding a division. Member of the CUP before 1908. Member of the inner circle of Unionist officers. Co-founder of Karakol (*secret CSM-related organization in Istanbul*) in 1918. Deported to Malta in 1920. On his return in 1922 helped to found the 'Second Group' opposition. Tried but acquitted during the purges of 1926. Died (probably suicide) in 1931. (Italics mine.) Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 393.

⁴⁵ Kadir Kasalak, *Milli Mücadele'de Manda ve Himaye Meselesi* (Ankara: 1993), pp. 123-124.

⁴⁶ The Ottoman/Turkish word is 'müzaheret.'

The American mandate was a highly contested issue at the Sivas Congress.

The supposedly 'national' character of the congress was certainly effective in this.⁴⁷ The leadership, with their circular of Amasya,⁴⁸ gathered this congress, whereas the Erzurum Congress was purely a regional initiative. The intellectuals and bureaucrats were much more interested in this congress. The leadership received many letters from important figures before the congress that were propagating for an American mandate. Mustafa Kemal pays special attention to the ones that were sent from Bekir Sami⁴⁹ from Amasya, in *Nutuk*.⁵⁰ It should not be forgotten that Bekir Sami had his signature on the Amasya Circular. Another proponent that sent a letter was the governor of Canik, Hamit Bey, who also had signed the Amasya Circular.⁵¹ Another important figure to have sent such a letter was Halide Edip (Adivar).⁵²

⁴⁷ There are various numbers about the representatives that attended to the Sivas Congress. For Sina Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri* v.1, p.514, the number is 38. Considering that 7 of them are members of the Eastern Anatolian Representative Committee, the remainder is 31. If 3 members from each city had arrived as was required by the circular, there should have been 120 representatives. The total number for Sabahattin Selek is even less: 31. See Sabahattin Selek, *Anadolu İhtilali* (Istanbul: 2000), v.1, p. 105. Many scholars question the representativeness of this congress. See Bülent Tanör, *Türkiye'de Kongre İktidarları, 1918-1920* (Istanbul: 1998), pp. 228-230.

⁴⁸ Mustafa Kemal presents the Amasya Circular of June 22, 1920 as the first call to the nation. The message is clear: "The determination and the will of the *nation* will save the *nation*, so a *national* congress should gather in Sivas as soon as possible." (Italics mine) Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, pp.30-31. This is a clear call for centralization and it is legitimized by reference to the nation. A number of military commanders and civil administrators had signed this circular.

⁴⁹ Bekir Sami (Kunduh). (1867-1933). Served as a provincial governor before the end of the Great War. He joined the movement in Anatolia in 1919, became a member of the executive of the Society for the Defense of National Rights, and was the first foreign minister of the Ankara government. Joined the PRP in 1924; was tried and acquitted on charges of involvement in the plot to assassinate Mustafa Kemal in 1926. Retired from politics the following year. Mango, *Atatürk*, pp. 543-544.

⁵⁰ Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, pp. 90-95. Also see Erol, *Türkiye'de*, pp. 76-77.

⁵¹ Kasalak, *Milli Mücadele'de*, p.130.

⁵² Halide Edip (Adivar). (1882-1964). Politically active writer. Educated in the American College. Her first articles appeared in the CUP newspaper *Tanin*. Established a society to promote women's participation in social life. After the armistice, she was a founder of the Wilson Society and became famous for her speeches protesting against the country's partition. She fled to Ankara with her husband Adnan, and was given the rank of Sergeant to enable her to witness fighting at the front in Mustafa Kemal's company. After the nationalist victory, she became critical of Mustafa Kemal and

Kara Vasıf, who was an extremely important personality for the movement in Istanbul and who was on his way to join the congress, had sent a pro-American mandate letter as well.⁵³ He was also a very strong proponent of that cause during the congress. Another pro-American mandate letter was sent from İsmet Bey in Istanbul to Kazım Karabekir in Erzurum.⁵⁴ İsmet Bey, who would become a very important figure in the leadership within less than a year, summarizes the concerns of all the other letters: "The only possible solution for surviving without dividing the country seems to be giving hand to an American supervision." The possibility of keeping the country together was appealing to many people and they were asking the CSM leadership to announce their sympathy towards an American mandate in the congress.⁵⁵ The leadership was replying to these letters in a very warm manner and was asking for more information about the terms of such a mandate.⁵⁶

The discussions in the congress meetings were more interesting in that the leaders themselves were taking a pro-American mandate position. For example, Bekir Sami, Refet (Bele)⁵⁷, and Kara Vasıf were defending such an argument.⁵⁸ Even

went abroad, returning in 1939 to take up the chair of English at Istanbul University. Mango, *Atatürk*, p.547. See Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, pp.95-98, and Erol, *Türkiye'de*, pp. 81-82 for Halide Edip's letter.

⁵³ Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, pp.101-102. Also see Erol, *Türkiye'de*, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁴ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.1, pp.424-427.

⁵⁵ Selek, *Anadolu İhtilali* v.1, pp.286-287. Also see Erol, *Türkiye'de*, p.72.

⁵⁶ See the telegrams that are signed only by Mustafa Kemal in Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, pp. 91-93, 94, 103. Also see Erol, *Türkiye'de*, p. 83.

⁵⁷ Refet (Bele). (1881-1963). Graduated top of class from Staff College in 1912; served mainly on Syrian front in Great War. Appointed 3rd corps commander after the armistice, accompanied Mustafa Kemal to Samsun in May 1919. Signed nationalist proclamation in Amasya; became member of the Representative Committee; suppressed rising in Konya. Interior minister, briefly commander of southern sector of western front, then defense minister to January 1922. Appointed Istanbul representative of Ankara government in October that year, also commander in Thrace until October 1923. One of the founders of the opposition PRP in November 1924. Tried and acquitted by Izmir Independence Tribunal in 1926. Retired from politics until 1935 when he was re-elected to assembly. Mango, *Atatürk*, p.552.

Rauf Bey, who is considered by many scholars to be the second most important figure, proposed a vote to draft and send a letter to the American Senate for an investigation committee. Sina Akşin and Mine Erol are troubled with the fact that Mustafa Kemal almost never intervenes in these discussions, although he is the president of the congress.⁵⁹ At one point, they even imply that this, together with Rauf's position, was a pre-determined strategy to control the American mandate activists.

The proposal that Rauf made was passed with unanimous vote, and a letter was sent to the American Senate.⁶⁰ On September 20, 1919, General Harbord of USA, whose initial mission was investigating the viability of a mandate on Armenia, arrived to Sivas with two other generals.⁶¹ For Akşin and Erol, it is again hard to explain why Mustafa Kemal told General Harbord that they would welcome the help from a strong and neutral state.⁶² Certainly, the situation becomes worse, when Mustafa Kemal is reported as telling to the general that his goal was to secure the unity of the Ottoman Empire with the mandate of a neutral state, preferably the USA.⁶³ Akşin and Erol overcome these problems by identifying the leadership's movements as tactical for securing American support for the nationalist cause, or just as being careless.⁶⁴ Mustafa Kemal does not provide sufficient information about

⁵⁸ Erol, *Türkiye'de*, pp. 90-91.

⁵⁹ Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri* v.1, p.530. Erol, *Türkiye'de*, p. 93.

⁶⁰ Erol, *Türkiye'de*, pp. 93-5, 129.

⁶¹ Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri*, p.531.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Erol, *Türkiye'de*, p.96.

⁶⁴ Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri*, pp.532-533. Erol, *Türkiye'de*, p.96.

these issues.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Rauf Orbay's memoirs did not support Akşin and Erol's conclusions at all. Both about the proposal in the congress and the conversation with General Harbord, Rauf never implies a pre-determined tactic to control American mandate supporters or to secure American support for the 'nationalist' cause.⁶⁶

All these points support the argument of this paper about strategy formulation. Rather than a retrospective reading of historical events, such as assigning a clear-cut strategy to the leadership, one needs to see the strategy formulation as a contingent process, which was affected with various factors, especially in a volatile area like post-WWI Eastern Anatolia. Whether we accept Akşin and Erol's analyses about a tactical use of the sympathy towards an American mandate or not, it is anachronistic to think that such decisions were calculated, conscious efforts. The political environment forced those decisions, and they certainly left residues in strategic formulations of the CSM leadership.

The discussion about an American mandate ended in 1920 when it became clear that the American Senate was not sympathetic towards an increased role in Asia.

The Bolshevik Solution

In the summer of 1919, the fate of the Bolshevik Revolution was still not clear. The Red Army was fighting against General Denikin's forces, which were

⁶⁵ Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, p.114. Mustafa Kemal says that he is not able to recall whether the letter was sent to the American Senate or not since he did not think the issue was important at all. In addition, on pp.172-173, he does not mention any kind of an appeal to an American mandate when he was talking to General Harbord.

⁶⁶ Rauf Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni: Siyasi Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: 1993), v.1, pp.256-258, 262-276.

backed up by the Entente Powers, specifically Britain and France. Britain was very worried about a future Bolshevik control of the Caucasus, which would mean the loss of oil revenues of Baku and a possibility of a Bolshevik backing of the resistance movement in Anatolia.⁶⁷ This last possibility was certainly considered by the CSM leaders as well. Such considerations can be traced back to June 1919.

On June 7, 1919, Kazım Karabekir, the commander of the 15th Army Corps, received a letter from Hüsrev Bey, who was a military officer at the headquarters of the 3rd Army Inspector-General, Mustafa Kemal Paşa.⁶⁸ Hüsrev Bey was concerned with the difficult situation that the country was facing: "I am suspicious about the chances of keeping the unity of a nation, even with a tight organization, when it has just ended a great war, lost every possession, and does not have an army, and weaponry."⁶⁹ This was a state of pessimism that was seen in the letters, which I mentioned in the previous section. Hüsrev Bey's solution was surprising. He argued that becoming Bolshevik without giving up the traditions would be extremely useful.⁷⁰ This letter is more important when we consider the date and the location. It is Mustafa Kemal's headquarters in Havza just fifteen days after his arrival to Samsun.

On June 23, 1919, it was Mustafa Kemal Paşa that sent a similar telegram to Kazım Karabekir.⁷¹ Mustafa Kemal wrote that Bolshevism was not contrary to the country's traditions, and an agreement with them was necessary for becoming

⁶⁷ Bülent Gökay, *Bolşevizm ile Emperyalizm Arasında Türkiye, 1918-1923* (Istanbul: 1997), p.72, 89.

⁶⁸ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.1, pp.197-202.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 200.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 201.

⁷¹ Ibid. pp. 189-193, Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri* v.2, p. 427.

powerful against the Entente powers. These telegrams reveal that the CSM leaders were closely following the events in the Caucasus. The British were the common enemy, and the leaders were trying to make use of this opportunity. Even becoming Bolshevik was defended by some of the leaders for reaching that goal.

In the second half of 1919, it was becoming clear that Denikin was losing the battle against the Red Army and was forced to retreat.⁷² The CSM leaders saw the uprisings in Dagestan against the retreating forces as an opportunity. Some Turkish officers were sent to Dagestan with support from Azerbaijan to organize the forces there and help the Bolsheviks.⁷³ The British government chose to recognize and support the governments in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to build a Caucasian Wall against the approaching Red Army.⁷⁴ However, they were not able to send back the troops, which they had withdrawn early in the year. The British government decided to provide financial support and military equipment to the Caucasian governments. At the same time, the British officer in Erzurum, Colonel Rawlinson, was proposing a joint attack against the Bolsheviks to Kazım Karabekir.⁷⁵

The new developments led to some reactions among the CSM leadership. On February 5, 1920, Mustafa Kemal sent a general evaluation of the current events to the commanders and the CSM leaders.⁷⁶ For him the Caucasian Wall strategy was unrealistic, and the Bolsheviks were destined to beat those governments. In addition,

⁷² Gökay, *Bolşevizm*, pp.87-88.

⁷³ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri: Ekim Devriminden 'Milli Mücadele'ye* (Istanbul: 1979), p.112.

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 115.

⁷⁵ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.2, pp.992-993. This is another example of how everything was uncertain. Both Karabekir and Mustafa Kemal did not dismiss such an offer immediately.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 994-1000.

Rawlinson's offer was unrealistic as well for him, when the small number of British troops in the region was considered. Mustafa Kemal was arguing that the only solution was to reach an agreement with the Bolsheviks, and help them bring down the Caucasian Wall, whose possible existence meant imprisonment of the country, for him. However, Karabekir was still not confident about a Bolshevik victory and he was recommending patience and caution. Mustafa Kemal would repeat this argument, as the president of the Grand National Assembly, in a letter directed to Foreign Commissar, Chicherin on April 26, 1920.⁷⁷

Mustafa Kemal's speech in the first closed meeting of the parliament on April 24, 1920 is worth considering as well. He said that 'considering every possibility, it may be necessary to seek foreign help for sustaining existence with the condition that our priorities are respected.'⁷⁸ The last example is again from a closed meeting of the parliament.⁷⁹ Çorum representative Haşim Bey asked about what was being done for reaching an alliance with the Bolsheviks, since a counter-alliance between Armenia and the Bolsheviks was seen as dangerous. Mustafa Kemal answered the question by saying that there are various attempts but they were being very careful on such an important topic.

All these examples show that becoming Bolshevik, pro-Bolshevik, or reaching an agreement with the Bolsheviks were seriously considered by the CSM leadership. Very much like the discussion on the American mandate, it is easy to dismiss these

⁷⁷ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.III pp. 1423-1425; Yerasimos, *Türk-Sovyet*, p. 232, Gökay, *Bolşevizm*, pp. 100-101. This letter will be analyzed in Part 4.

⁷⁸ *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları* (Ankara 1985), v.1, pp.4-5, 04/24/1920, 2nd gathering, 4th session.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 33-34, 5/17/1920, 17th gathering, 2nd session.

efforts as tactical to cover the true strategy of the leadership. However, the existence of these types of letters both in the earlier period but also in the parliamentary period, hints the flexibility of the leadership in searching for a better strategy.

Armed Resistance Without an Offensive

The inauguration of the Grand National Assembly in April 23, 1920 was a significant event. The CSM was considering itself much more legitimate against the government in Istanbul.⁸⁰ This self-confidence was reflected in their strategy formulation. In this section, I will mention parts from two speeches in the parliamentary meetings. The first one is a closed meeting speech by İsmet Bey, who was the Chief of Military Staff. The second one is a regular meeting speech by Mustafa Kemal. These speeches reflect the ascendance of a new strategy among the CSM leadership: armed resistance without an offensive.

After a long analysis of the general situation, İsmet Bey started defending the strategy that should be adopted, on May 29, 1920.⁸¹ He argued that there were not enough enemy forces to occupy the country. Moving from this point, he continued that the safest solution was to show that it would cost a lot to the Entente powers to win. And this was only possible by a stubborn resistance. For him, an offensive was totally unnecessary since it was clear that a strong resistance would lead to the solution. The shift in strategy formulation is very clear. İsmet Bey, one of the most

⁸⁰ Gökay, *Bolşevizm*, p.339. Also see Mango, *Atatürk*, pp.272-273.

⁸¹ *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları* v.1, pp.38-44, 05/27/1920, 21st gathering, 2nd session.

prominent CSM leaders did not mention foreign help at all, but also shied away from an aggressive strategy as well.

Mustafa Kemal Paşa's speech on July 8, 1920 follows İsmet Bey's argument.⁸² He said that 'the ultimate goal is to protect the independence of the nation and the state; to protect the entire nation within the determined borders. That is why we are fighting... We will continue fighting from the last mountain, even if the entire country is occupied.' He continued by saying that the aim was to defend the country by military mobilization.

It is clear through an analysis of the speeches in the parliament, and the telegrams exchanged between the leaders that the emphasis was moving towards a more self-sustained resistance movement. However, this new position was not going so far as to talk about an offensive.

It is not realistic to assume that Mustafa Kemal Paşa had a clear-cut strategy upon his arrival to Samsun in May 19, 1919. His efforts in Istanbul, the letters from his headquarters upon his arrival, his discussion with General Harbord, and his aforementioned speech in the parliament reveal that there was a search for a strategy. Notwithstanding this state of flux, we should be able to see the pattern in the search: the CSM leadership steered towards a more hawkish strategy throughout the struggle. The underlying reason for this change was the leadership's increased legitimacy,

⁸² Kazım Öztürk, *Atatürk'ün T.B.M.M. Açık ve Gizli Oturumlarındaki Konuşmaları* (Ankara: 1981), pp.205-206, 07/08/1920.

which was gradually achieved by their stronger position in the power struggles vis-à-vis the other social and political actors.

Throughout the analysis of the alternative strategies, we saw that the tiny leadership of the CSM evolved into a quasi-legitimate state-in-the-making at the expense of the government in Istanbul. Also, it became apparent that the presence of the USA and Britain were diminishing at the Eastern Front. On the other hand, Bolshevik Russia was becoming more and more powerful. In this web of changing power relations, it is easy to explain the move towards a more hawkish strategy. The weak CSM had seriously discussed an American mandate, and becoming Bolshevik, or pro-Bolshevik. However when the parliament was established in Ankara, the discussions turned towards becoming allies with the Bolsheviks or defending the country alone.

Part IV – The Militarist Strategy

“Among the Western Army troops, among the Western Army commanders, a certain view had developed. They were thinking that the enemy was alone in a certain place; we could beat them there; and a great advantage could be gained by beating them. This view had affected the entire army, the entire civil administrators, and most of the people. Even our delegates who had visited the front were affected... Apparently, it was not a wise decision to cancel, or reject such a view that had developed among so many people, especially in the military. I compared the results that rejecting such a view could have brought, and the results that such an offensive could have created... As you all very well know, the Gediz offensive took place.” Mustafa Kemal Paşa, in a closed parliamentary session. December 9, 1920.⁸³

On 20 September 1920, Kazım Karabekir received the permission to initiate the offensive against the Armenian forces. This was the end of the search for a strategy in the Eastern Front, in favor of a militarist strategy, i.e. solving the problem through an armed and organized offensive. The initial question of this paper was why the CSM leadership ended up with a militarist strategy. In this part, I argue that the answer should be sought through an analysis of how the power dynamics in the region changed, and how changes in the international arena affected the region. The CSM's and the Bolsheviks' power were increasing, whereas that of Britain, USA, and Istanbul government were decreasing. This enabled the CSM to choose a more hawkish strategy like attacking Armenia militarily, which only had the chance to be backed up by the Bolsheviks with whom the Armenians were already at war. In addition, I will argue that the militarist strategy was chosen because the military, but not the other groups who represented the alternative strategies, was powerful enough to force its own strategy upon the leadership. Through presenting a trajectory of the decision-making processes and an analysis of the historical developments, I will

⁸³ TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları v.1, p.276, 12/09/1920, 123rd gathering, 1st session.

portray the selection of the militarist strategy. The latter part will be about the built-in dependencies of the CSM leadership on the military.

The discussions for an American mandate had slowed down when it was understood that the American Senate was not willing to take any responsibilities in Asia. In addition, the British demobilization was apparent by the end of 1919. It became more and more clear that Britain lacked the military power to enforce its strategies in Caucasus. Bolsheviks were expected to beat Denikin's forces and confront with the young Caucasian Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

With respect to this international environment, the domestic configuration of power relations had changed drastically as well. Right after the Sivas Congress, on September 30, 1919, the CSM leadership was able to force Damat Ferit Paşa's cabinet in Istanbul to resignation by stopping communication. This was a major achievement for the CSM.⁸⁴ Following Damat Ferit's resignation, the task to form a new cabinet was granted to Ali Rıza Paşa. Mersinli Cemal Paşa,⁸⁵ who had a signature on the Amasya Circular but had left for Istanbul later, was appointed as the War Minister in this new cabinet. This shows the power of the CSM on Istanbul. A

⁸⁴ The similarities with the 1908 Revolution are tremendous. However, Mustafa Kemal and Kazım Karabekir denounce such allegations immediately since being identified with the CUP is the last preferable thing for the moment. However, the following interventions into cabinet formation and policies reflect the resemblance further.

⁸⁵ Cemal Paşa (Mersinli). (1873-d.?). Served alongside Mustafa Kemal in Syria in 1918; though senior in rank (he was a Major-General), he was passed over when Brigadier Mustafa Kemal succeeded Liman von Sanders at the head of the Lightning Group. After the armistice appointed 2nd Army inspector in Konya. Unlike Mustafa Kemal, he returned to Istanbul when his *nationalist* stance led to a British demand for his recall. Became war minister in Ali Rıza Paşa's *pro-nationalist* government in October 1919. Theoretically the representative in the capital of the Society for the Defense of National Rights, he angered Mustafa Kemal by resigning in January 1920 in response to Allied pressure. Exiled to Malta after the Allied occupation of Istanbul in March 1920. Unlike most other exiles, he did not join Mustafa Kemal on his return to Turkey. In 1926, he was arrested for alleged involvement in the plot to kill Mustafa Kemal, but was acquitted by the Izmir Independence Tribunal. (Italics mine). Mango, *Atatürk*, p. 544.

meeting between Mustafa Kemal, Rauf and Minister of Marine Salih Paşa at Amasya on October 20-22, 1919 solidified this increased power. Both of the sides agreed on the opening of the Ottoman parliament.

On January 12, 1920, the last Ottoman parliament gathered with many CSM representatives including Rauf, himself. They immediately founded a group and later passed Misak-ı Milli (The National Pact), which drew the borders of the 'nation' (very vaguely though) on February 17. The Entente representatives in Istanbul closely watched all these movements and many of them were very critical. Such activities of the parliament were ended abruptly by the official occupation of Istanbul by the Entente forces on March 16, and some CSM representatives, including Rauf, were arrested. Both the CSM leadership and the military commanders reacted promptly to this occupation and all the Entente representatives, including General Rawlinson in Erzurum, were arrested in response. The Representative Committee immediately sent out an invitation to all the MPs, and asked for general elections in the provinces to establish the parliament in Ankara. By the inauguration of the GNA on April 23, 1920, and the establishment of a cabinet, the CSM changed drastically. The CSM started to see itself as the 'sole representative of the nation' and defined itself as the only legitimate government by not recognizing the government in Istanbul any more.

The changes in strategic formulations were totally dependent upon these changes in power configuration. In the previous part I concluded that the CSM leadership steered towards a more hawkish strategy because of its increased power in

domestic politics and because of a relative power vacuum in Eastern Anatolia. The development of the militarist strategy should be seen with this light as well.

The first idea to mobilize the army and attack the Armenians 'in case' came from Ankara. In a long telegram that was sent to Kazım Karabekir on February 7, 1920, Mustafa Kemal asked about Karabekir's evaluations on this issue.⁸⁶ Karabekir dismissed the idea for the reason that the Bolshevik progress was still not clear and more importantly it was not logical to mobilize in Eastern Anatolia in February. Karabekir concluded, when later in the year Ankara rejected his proposals to attack, that Mustafa Kemal had wanted a mobilization and perhaps an offensive in February, because he was trying to accelerate the process towards the occupation of Istanbul by Entente powers.⁸⁷ This would mean, as events revealed, increased legitimacy for CSM and a probable presidency of the parliament for Mustafa Kemal. Mustafa Kemal asked again about Karabekir's evaluation on a mobilization on March 16,⁸⁸ immediately after Istanbul was occupied; and this can be interpreted as Mustafa Kemal's efforts to direct the MPs to Ankara as the seat of real power in Anatolia. However, Karabekir dismissed the idea with the same reasons.⁸⁹ It is clear that the highest priority for CSM leadership in Ankara at that period was to gain increased legitimacy by establishing a new parliament in Ankara. The occupation of Istanbul was necessary for that purpose, and Mustafa Kemal was trying to achieve that.

⁸⁶ See the telegram signed by Mustafa Kemal in Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.2, pp.994-1000.

⁸⁷ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.3, p.1552, and Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.4, 1640.

⁸⁸ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.3, pp.1146-1147.

⁸⁹ See Karabekir's reply in *ibid.* pp. 1147-1148.

However, Kazım Karabekir was not willing to pay the price by mobilizing his army without any sound bases.⁹⁰

It is appropriate to mention the strategy formulation process of Kazım Karabekir and his staff at this point. Karabekir argues that he already had the plan to attack Armenia prior to his arrival in Erzurum. This argument can never be validated for sure. In fact, it is clear that his strategy had changed multiple times throughout the struggle, as well. However, after the establishment of the Grand National Assembly (GNA), Karabekir solidified his position with the militarist strategy. He started asking for permission by April 26, 1920.

Before moving to the events after the establishment of the GNA, focusing on Karabekir's constraints in Eastern Anatolia is necessary. Karabekir was the commander who liberated this region during WWI. He was widely known and respected in the region. That was the reason why he chose the 15th Army Corps as his next appointment. More importantly, these units were the most fresh and unharmed ones in the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire.⁹¹ However, they were not without problems. Not many people were willing to be drafted or to remain in the army due to long years of wars and losses. Defections were common. The only reason that was keeping these people in the army was a possibility of Armenian occupation, and the atrocities that would almost certainly follow. So the main priority, as Kazım Karabekir argues, for most of the soldiers was defending Eastern

⁹⁰ This difference is a clear example of how the CSM leadership and military leadership may differ in strategic formulation.

⁹¹ Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Milli Mücadele Hatıraları* (Istanbul: 2000), p.22, p.60. Also see Selek, *Anadolu İhtilali* v.1, p.112.

Anatolia, the homeland for many of them. Two letters addressed to him by soldiers from two different tribes reveal these concerns: the head of the Zilan tribe Major Ali, and the head of the Sebiki tribe Major Abdülmecid asked for permission to leave because of an assault against their villages by the Armenians.⁹² This was a great constraint on Karabekir's strategy formulation. That may help us understand his extraordinary emphasis on Eastern Anatolian rights and affairs. This may also help us understand his coalition with the members of the Trabzon Representative Committee, İzzet Bey and Servet Bey, who were in opposition to CSM leadership on many issues. He supported İzzet and Servet when they were criticizing the absorption of the Representative Committee of the Erzurum Congress into the Representative Committee of the Sivas Congress.⁹³ İzzet and Servet were afraid that the integrity of Eastern Anatolia would be threatened in a larger entity like Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti (Defense of Rights Organization of Anatolia and Rumelia), which was established during the Sivas Congress to unite all the local defense of rights organizations. Karabekir's support for İzzet and Servet is very meaningful. Karabekir is usually portrayed as being not capable enough to think in more nation-wide terms,⁹⁴ however it is clear that his arguments and strategies had reflected the social and political constraints that he was facing. These points should be kept in mind, when Karabekir and his staff's decisions are analyzed. The military

⁹² Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.2, pp.701-702.

⁹³ Ibid, pp.548-555, 571, 575-577, 638-639. Also see Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, pp.145-152, and v.3, pp. 1044-1046. Also see Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri* v.1, p.568 and Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet: İkinci Grup* (Istanbul: 1994), pp.66-69.

⁹⁴ See Mango, *Atatürk*, p.251 for an example.

leaders in the Eastern Front were not eager to risk their position in the East by mobilizing their units in the middle of the winter for an uncertain campaign.

Right after his election as the president of the GNA, Mustafa Kemal sent a letter to the Bolsheviks on April 26, 1920.⁹⁵ The letter was an official offer of alliance and it echoed the new attitude of the CSM leadership. They were more confident in themselves and the Bolsheviks were seen no more as a super power to be appeased. Rather they were seen as a prospective ally with equal terms. Also a negotiation team, consisting of Bekir Sami Bey and Yusuf Kemal Bey, was on its long and burdensome way to Moscow. In the meantime, the CSM was hearing about the advancement of the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus and they were applauded with enthusiasm.

With the coming of spring, and the establishment of a 'national' government in Ankara, Karabekir thought that the time for an attack against the Armenians had come. Since Mustafa Kemal was seemingly supporting such an attack, Karabekir asked the parliament to grant the permission to attack on April 26, 1920.⁹⁶ Two days later, Ankara replied that the issue was under consideration but they would give the final order.⁹⁷ On May 6, Karabekir repeated his appeal that he should be given the discretion to decide on the moment of attacking.⁹⁸ On the same day, Karabekir received the shocking telegram from Ankara. Mustafa Kemal was saying that an

⁹⁵ This letter, which was mentioned in the previous part, was addressed to Foreign Commissar Chicherin.

⁹⁶ See Karabekir's telegram in Karabekir, *Istiklal Harbimiz* v.3, pp.1418-1421.

⁹⁷ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in *ibid.* p. 1485.

⁹⁸ See Karabekir's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1499-1500.

offensive was undesirable.⁹⁹ A more secure CSM leadership was shying away from an offensive against the Armenian forces when the Bolshevik reaction against such an aggression was not clearly foreseen. Mustafa Kemal was realizing, as Karabekir did less than two months ago, that there were many things to lose in case of a premature attack. The fresh forces in Erzurum were too valuable to be wasted. The CSM leadership was much more careful about an offensive when centralization and legitimization were not the only primary concerns.

On May 9, Karabekir repeated his will to attack with a long telegram.¹⁰⁰ Both on May 10, and May 13 Ankara replied, stating again that an offensive was not appropriate and the order had to be issued by them.¹⁰¹ On May 30, Karabekir again was pressing hard to get permission for mobilization.¹⁰² He was arguing that occupation of Sarıkamış was necessary both for protecting Muslim population against Armenian atrocities and also for economic purposes. He was planning to utilize Sarıkamış timber to decrease the wood prices in Erzurum and environs. However, Mustafa Kemal rejected to grant permission on the following day by arguing in a long telegram that the army was not powerful enough and more importantly, a misunderstanding from the Bolshevik part was feared.¹⁰³ On June 4, Karabekir was trying his last chance.¹⁰⁴ In a longer telegram, he was arguing that at least control of

⁹⁹ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1502-1503.

¹⁰⁰ See Karabekir's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1518-1526.

¹⁰¹ See Mustafa Kemal's telegrams *ibid.* pp. 1544-1545 and pp. 1546-1547 respectively.

¹⁰² See Karabekir's telegram in Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.4, pp.1615-1617.

¹⁰³ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1621-1625.

¹⁰⁴ See Karabekir's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1633-1639.

the Soğanlı Mountains was essential for defensive purposes. On June 6, Ankara finally gave way to Karabekir's demands.¹⁰⁵

Karabekir immediately ordered mobilization. The troops started to move to the frontline to take advancing position. In the mean time, Chicherin's reply to Mustafa Kemal's letter arrived on June 15, 1920.¹⁰⁶ Karabekir immediately delivered it to Ankara. Chicherin was very optimistic about a good relationship between Soviet Russia and Nationalist Turkey. However, the alliance offer was not mentioned at all.¹⁰⁷ After getting a positive reply from Chicherin, Mustafa Kemal immediately ordered Karabekir not to start the offensive.¹⁰⁸ Karabekir was furious about this decision and kept on pressing the government to give permission for starting the offensive.¹⁰⁹ However, on June 20, Mustafa Kemal was replying to Chicherin by saying that they halted the offensive against the Armenian forces and Bolshevik mediation was expected.¹¹⁰

Representatives of Trabzon and Erzurum were not happy about the halting of the offensive, which they saw as essential for their existence within the Ottoman borders. On August 2, three Erzurum representatives issued a question to the government, in the GNA. They were asking why the offensive was halted despite Armenian atrocities and Bolshevik advancement.¹¹¹ Mustafa Kemal replied by arguing that upon the arrival of Chicherin's reply, it became clear that a *peaceful*

¹⁰⁵ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1647-1648.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 1661-1662.

¹⁰⁷ Salahi R. Sonyel, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Dış Politika* (Ankara: 1996), v.2, p.6.

¹⁰⁸ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.4, p.1707.

¹⁰⁹ The Commander of the Western Army, Ali Fuat Cebesoy also criticizes this decision of Ankara. Cebesoy, *Milli*, pp.524-528, p.556.

¹¹⁰ Sonyel, *Türk*, v.2, p.7.

¹¹¹ Öztürk, *Atatürk'ün*, pp.249-250. 08/14/1920.

solution to the Armenian problem was possible.¹¹² In addition, the Bolshevik good will was proven by the meeting of Red Army troops and GNA troops in Nahcevan to defend the region together.¹¹³ This question of the Eastern Anatolian representatives is a sign of the coalition between them and Kazım Karabekir.

Karabekir was not happy with the situation at all. He had tried to avoid this kind of a standstill in February and March. He feared defections. Then he started to threaten Ankara by saying that he would start a de facto offensive if the permission were not granted before winter.¹¹⁴ On August 22, İsmet Bey, Chief of Military Staff, replied by emphasizing that the decision to attack should be ordered by Ankara.¹¹⁵ On September 2, Karabekir wrote in his notes that he would attack without permission if he considered it necessary.¹¹⁶ On September 13, he ordered some limited offensives.¹¹⁷ Yusuf Kemal Bey, who was in the negotiation team that was commissioned to Moscow, returned Trabzon on September 18, and immediately sent a telegram to Ankara about what the Bolsheviks were offering.¹¹⁸ The Bolsheviks were agreeing to a Turkish occupation of Sarıkamış but they were asking for the GNA to leave Bitlis and Van to Armenia. It was not possible to defend a diplomatic solution in the GNA when the Bolsheviks were asking for Bitlis and Van. The Eastern Anatolian representatives would dismiss the idea immediately. In addition,

¹¹² Ibid. pp. 250-263.

¹¹³ See Veysel Ünlüvar, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Bolşeviklerle Sekiz Ay: 1920-1921* (Istanbul: 1997).

Ünlüvar was the commander of the GNA troops in Nahcevan.

¹¹⁴ See his telegram conversation with İsmet Bey on the night of August 18/19 in Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.4, pp. 1801-1802.

¹¹⁵ See İsmet's telegram in ibid. pp. 1803-1804.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 1829.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 1851.

¹¹⁸ Yusuf Kemal Tengirşenk, *Vatan Hizmetinde* (Istanbul: 1967), pp.178-182.

Karabekir was threatening to attack on his own before the winter came. Under these conditions, Ankara ordered the offensive on September 20, 1920.¹¹⁹

The pressure upon the government to order the offensive was heavy as we saw with Karabekir's and Eastern Anatolian representatives' appeals. On the other hand, the government was cautious with the hope that a diplomatic solution could be achieved through Bolshevik intermediation or at least their neutrality, in the case of an offensive, could be guaranteed. When Yusuf Kemal arrived in Trabzon with the offer, it was clear that a diplomatic solution, still, was not close. Ankara did not have any chance but to give way to Karabekir, and his allies' demands hoping that the improved relations with the Bolsheviks would not be ruined.

In general, the military is a significant source of power for the basic reason that they nominally control the means of coercion under their discretion. However, the military was a much more important source of power in 1919-1920 Anatolia, due to the power vacuum in the region, and the initial dependencies of the CSM leadership on the military. Even if the military was on its way to demobilization and fragmentation because of the Mudros Armistice Treaty, it was still the most organized coercive force in the region. Also, the military background of the CSM leaders forced them to rely on the legitimacy and control of the army commanders in the initial stages of the movement (if not later). This section will be an elaboration of these points in order to clarify CSM leadership's inability to disregard Karabekir's pressures to adopt the militarist strategy:

¹¹⁹ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.4, p.1860.

Mustafa Kemal was the highest ranked, Ottoman military and civil authority in Eastern Anatolia when he arrived in Samsun in May 1919. This was a clear source of legitimacy for his movements but it took two months for the government in Istanbul to understand his 'rebellious' activities and he was dismissed from the post. He responded by resigning from the army. At that point, just before the inauguration of the Erzurum Congress, Mustafa Kemal, Rauf and the others without a post were prone to danger. They could have been arrested when the government issued the order. However, it was Kazım Karabekir who supported Mustafa Kemal in Eastern Anatolia despite such orders.¹²⁰ Karabekir's decision to protect Mustafa Kemal was not openly challenged by others; this is a clear example of the extent of military power in that region at that period. Also, Mustafa Kemal's dependence on Karabekir's protection shows the initial dependency of the CSM leadership on the military.

The CSM leadership was certainly aware of the dependence on the military. There are many examples that a special status was assigned to the military, and military commanders. I will give three examples: first, after the fall of the Damat Ferit Paşa cabinet, one of the first things that was asked from the Minister of War Cemal Paşa was to assign certain commanders to certain posts.¹²¹ Second, when Mustafa Kemal and Rauf were leaving to meet with Minister of Marine Salih Paşa at Amasya, only the opinions of the commanders were solicited.¹²² Third, only the

¹²⁰ Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri* v.1, p.475. Also see Mango, *Atatürk*, p.251.

¹²¹ Akşin, *Istanbul Hükümetleri* v.2, pp.15-16.

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 39.

commanders were invited to Sivas for evaluation when the inauguration of the Ottoman parliament was discussed.¹²³

Another issue, which is usually neglected, is the code for the telegrams. Telegram was the most efficient communication technology of the period. However, by its nature, it was not secure at all. So codes were developed to cipher the messages, and the recipient was deciphering to read the message. All the army commanders had their own codes for telegram communication. All of the telegrams in Karabekir's *İstiklal Harbimiz* indicate that his telegrams were ciphered according to his code and were directed to the army headquarters in Sivas or Ankara, where the CSM leadership was residing. Those telegrams were deciphered by the recipient commanders and were handed to the leaders. When the CSM leadership was sending a high-security telegram, they were again ciphered with the codes of the Sivas or Ankara commanders and then sent.¹²⁴ This is another example of the organizational dependency of the CSM leadership on the military.

The CSM leadership needed the support of the military not only for organizational purposes but also for survival. Any historical study that deals with this period is full with accounts of rebellions that the CSM leadership successfully suppresses either as the Representative Committee, or as the GNA. These successful suppressions need a more elaborate analysis. It is important to see how the CSM

¹²³ *ibid.* pp. 61-63. Also see Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, *Heyet-i Temsiliye Kararları* (Ankara: 1974), p. 36, for the relevant decision of the Representative Committee.

¹²⁴ It is interesting that Mustafa Kemal does not talk about the importance of the codes in *Nutuk*. However there are a couple of places where he mentions it. See Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, p.120 for an example.

leadership, which was initially under the protection of a commander to survive, managed to crush so many oppositional movements.

With the support of the Istanbul government or not, there were many anti-CSM movements throughout the struggle. Such events took place in Bolu-Düzce, Konya, Yozgat, Elazığ by Ali Galip, and the most famous one by Anzavur in Karesi-Bursa region. These were organized and armed rebellions against the authority of the CSM leadership. The only way to suppress these rebellions was using armed forces (the irregular Kuva-yı Milliye forces or the regular military forces.)¹²⁵ The CSM leadership tried to utilize these forces to keep central control, and more importantly to survive. Especially the rebellion in Yozgat was a direct threat to the GNA in Ankara. This fact clearly presents another built-in dependency of the CSM leadership on the military.¹²⁶ Mustafa Kemal in Nutuk voices this dependency when he discusses the Ali Galip rebellion.¹²⁷ Also, İsmet Bey in one of the closed parliamentary meetings on July 3, 1920, mentions this dependency upon the armed forces.¹²⁸

Karabekir reports multiple times that Ankara requested troops to guarantee security. On April 18, 1920, Mustafa Kemal asked Karabekir to send a force of 500-1000 soldiers.¹²⁹ On May 13 when Mustafa Kemal was repeating that they would be the authority to decide on the attack, he also asked when and how many units

¹²⁵ Zeki Sarihan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda İkili İktidar* (Istanbul: 2000), pp.25-27. Many examples of such a concern can be seen among the decisions of the Representative Committee. See Baykal, *Heyet-i Temsiliye Kararları*, p.11 for an example.

¹²⁶ Cebesoy, *Milli*, pp.400-406.

¹²⁷ Atatürk, *Nutuk* v.1, p.131.

¹²⁸ *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları* v.1, pp.53-56. 07/03/1920 26th gathering, 2nd session.

¹²⁹ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* v.3, pp.1378-1379.

Karabekir could move towards west.¹³⁰ Karabekir immediately dismissed the discussion and said that no troops would be moved to west before an offensive against the Armenian forces.¹³¹ On May 15, Mustafa Kemal repeated his request from Karabekir to move some troops towards west, by mentioning a number of rebellions and potential rebellions.¹³² Karabekir replied firmly that it was impossible because people would react to that and there would be many defections in the army.¹³³ It should be remembered that Ankara gave way to Karabekir's demands by the first order of mobilization and offensive, just twenty days after this exchange of telegrams. All throughout the struggle, during the time period of this study, the CSM leadership was dependent upon the military not only for organizational reasons but also for survival.

The goal of this part was to answer the question why the CSM leadership ended up with the militarist strategy, i.e. armed and organized offensive. Two conclusions appear after the analysis. The first one is the continuation of the pattern towards a more hawkish stance in strategy formulation, which was identified in the previous part. With the decline of American, British and Istanbul power and the ascendance of CSM and Bolshevik power in Eastern Anatolia, the CSM leadership moved towards a more hawkish strategy in general, despite frequent changes and reversals. The militarist strategy seemed to be more and more appropriate when the

¹³⁰ See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1546-1547.

¹³¹ See Karabekir's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1548-1549.

¹³² See Mustafa Kemal's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1554-1555.

¹³³ See Karabekir's telegram in *ibid.* pp. 1558-1562.

relations with the Bolsheviks, the only alternative power center in the region, were improving. The second conclusion is related to the relations of CSM leadership vis-à-vis the military. By portraying the dependencies of the CSM on the military, this study shows why they ended up with the militarist strategy.

Conclusion

Neither Mustafa Kemal nor the rest of the CSM leaders had a clear-cut strategy of how to 'save the state' upon their arrival to Anatolia. If they had an idea, it was vague and was prone to many alterations and reversals throughout the struggle. In order to answer the question how and why the CSM leaders ended up with a militarist strategy, I decided to look at both the domestic and international configuration of power relations in the context of Eastern Anatolia. I showed that the CSM leaders seriously evaluated three different strategies: the American mandate, the Bolshevik solution, and armed resistance without an offensive. I also argued that despite this state of flux in strategy formulation, one could identify a movement towards a more hawkish strategy. The main reason for this pattern was increased power of the CSM. Through an analysis of the events, I concluded that the British, American and Istanbul power was decreasing in Eastern Anatolia whereas that of the CSM and the Bolsheviks was on the rise. Especially, the CSM was experiencing a tremendous increase in legitimacy when Istanbul was occupied by the Entente powers and the parliament was transferred to Ankara.

Then, I looked at the historical trajectory that ended on September 20, 1920 with the attack against the Armenian forces. I argued that the pattern towards a more hawkish strategy was continuing since the CSM leadership was feeling more secure due to improving relations with the Bolsheviks. This sense of security was one of the reasons why the leadership chose the militarist strategy. However, there was another

reason: the dependency of the CSM leadership on the military. The CSM leadership, from the very beginning, was dependent on the military not only for organizational reasons, but also for its survival. This dependency led them to adopt the militarist strategy, which was the strategy of the military.

Two main points arise after these conclusions. The first one is the perpetuation of the dependence on the military by choosing the militarist strategy. Naturally, the militarist strategy requires a military force, so the CSM leadership became more dependent on the military. In addition, the success of the militarist strategy in the Eastern Front brought higher prestige for the military commanders, and presented an example for the other fronts.¹³⁴ Overall, the perpetuation of the structural dependencies on the military granted this part of the state a strong say in all decision-making processes. This conclusion is a useful tool to understand the ascendance of military figures through the initial years of the Republic (if not later).

The second point is a historiographical conclusion. Assigning a clear-cut strategy to the CSM leaders upon their arrival to Anatolia has broader meanings than their intelligence and far-sightedness. It implies they were aware of the boundaries of this new republic, both territorially and conceptually, from the very beginning. It implies that they knew that Western Thrace, Mosul, Batum and Hatay would be left out, and Eastern Thrace, Kars, Ardahan, Iğdır, Bitlis, Van, Maraş, Antep would be included in the borders of the new republic. More importantly, what it implies is, they knew that the end-result would be a 'Turkish' republic, with no American or

¹³⁴ In a couple of months, the commander of the Western Army, Ali Fuat Paşa initiated an attack against the Greek forces despite Ankara's concerns. The attack was not successful.

Bolshevik mandate, and with no Arabic or Kurdish official components. However, the search for a strategy, which was clearly portrayed in this study, shows that these boundaries were not conceived by the CSM leaders, prior to their arrival to Anatolia. On the contrary, the territorial and conceptual boundaries of the new state were created spontaneously very much like the search for the best strategy.

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