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**Master Program in**  
**<Mediterranean Studies>**

**Greek-Turkish Rapprochement under the Leadership of**  
**Venizelos and Ataturk and the effects on Balkan**  
**Geopolitics**

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**Corinth, September 2017**

**Πανεπιστήμιο Πελοποννήσου**  
**Σχολή Κοινωνικών και Πολιτικών Επιστημών**  
**Τμήμα Πολιτικής Επιστήμης και Διεθνών Σχέσεων**

**Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών**  
**< Μεσογειακές Σπουδες >**

**Η ελληνοτουρκική προσέγγιση κάτω από την ηγεσία του**  
**Βενιζέλου και του Ατατούρκ και οι επιπτώσεις στη**  
**βαλκανική γεωπολιτική**

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**Κόρινθος, Σεπτέμβριος 2017**

**Keywords:** Greece, Turkey, Venizelos, Ataturk, Balkans, Rapprochement, Geopolitics, Balkan Entente

### **Abstract**

This study examines the rapprochement of Venizelos and Ataturk, in which one of the rare periods of peace was created in the history of Greek-Turkish relations which was often full of struggles of superiority over each other. Also, the reflection of this rapprochement process on the Balkans is studied. The aim of the work is to reveal the process of rapprochement, which was realized by Venizelos and Ataturk with the effort of setting an example to the world, in order to establish real peace between the two countries which had recently fought with each other. In addition to this, it is aimed to show the reflection of this pragmatist and constructive policies on the Greek-Turkish relations and Balkan geopolitics. In this context, the basic research question of the study is to analyze how the leadership nature of Venizelos and Ataturk influenced Greek-Turkish rapprochement. This work claims as a basic argument that the peace-based period which Venizelos and Ataturk established was the most important period of Greek-Turkish rapprochement. In conclusion, this study forecasts that it is possible that this sincere reconciliation formed under the leadership of the two leaders could be achieved in the future.

**Σημαντικοί Όροι:** Ελλάδα, Τουρκία, Βενιζέλος, Ατατούρκ, Βαλκάνια, Σχέσεις, Γεωπολιτική, Βαλκανική Συμφωνία

## Περίληψη

Η μελέτη αυτή εξετάζει την προσέγγιση των Βενιζέλων και Ατατούρκ, στην οποία δημιουργήθηκε μία από τις σπάνιες περιόδους ειρήνης στην ιστορία των ελληνοτουρκικών σχέσεων, η οποία ήταν συχνά γεμάτη αγώνες ανωτερότητας μεταξύ τους. Επίσης, μελετάται η αντανάκλαση αυτής της διαδικασίας προσέγγισης στα Βαλκάνια. Σκοπός του έργου είναι να αποκαλύψει τη διαδικασία προσέγγισης, η οποία πραγματοποιήθηκε από τον Βενιζέλο και τον Ατατούρκ με την προσπάθεια να δοθεί ένα παράδειγμα στον κόσμο, προκειμένου να δημιουργηθεί πραγματική ειρήνη μεταξύ των δύο χωρών που είχαν αγωνιστεί πρόσφατα μεταξύ τους. Επιπρόσθετα, αποσκοπεί να δείξει την αντανάκλαση αυτής της ρεαλιστικής και εποικοδομητικής πολιτικής στις ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις και τη γεωπολιτική των Βαλκανίων. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, το βασικό ερευνητικό ερώτημα της μελέτης είναι να αναλύσει πώς η ηγετική φύση του Βενιζέλου και του Ατατούρκ επηρέασε την ελληνοτουρκική προσέγγιση. Το έργο αυτό υποστηρίζει ως βασικό επιχείρημα ότι η εποχή της ειρήνης που καθιέρωσαν οι Βενιζέλος και Ατατούρκ ήταν η σημαντικότερη περίοδος ελληνοτουρκικής προσέγγισης. Εν κατακλείδι, η μελέτη αυτή προβλέπει ότι είναι δυνατόν αυτή η ειλικρινής συμφιλίωση να διαμορφωθεί υπό την ηγεσία των δύο ηγετών να επιτευχθεί στο μέλλον.

To the people of two friendly nations on two sides of the beautiful Aegean ...



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Hereby, I would like to thank the important people who have contributed to the creation of this work.

First of all, I would like to thank very much my valuable advisor Prof. Dr. Nikolaos TZIFAKIS who has given me the chance to study in the Mediterranean Studies Master program of Peloponnese University, which I feel honored and proud to be a part of. He has helped me both during my thesis period as well my course and has never left my questions unanswered. In my thesis period, he has always encouraged and supported me and with constructive comments and positive directions he helped the creation of this study. This work has come to existence with the self-giving help of my valued advisor, whom I take as an example in my academic career. I have learned so much from him in terms of humanity and academic sense due to his unique academic humility, self-devotion and commitment.

I would like to express my thanks to my instructor Professor Dr. Osmangazi Ozgudenli who has put great effort in my coming to this academic level with his help and helpful guidance. In addition to this, I would like to thank Burak Yilmaz, who has both helped me overcome the difficulties I faced during my undergraduate education and who has given great support to me during my studies. For this reason I will remain grateful to him for all my life.

Also I would like to thank Kani Turhan, Tufan Eytamis, Safa Agac, Mehmet Ates and Murat Gonulseven, my esteemed friends. They have helped me to develop in academic terms by means of the scientific talks we have done together. I would like to thank all the librarians, who helped me find the necessary papers and documents, the colleagues who helped me translate the Greek sources. I thank all of the department teachers and the secretarial unit of the university. I thank my dear family very much for giving me morale and support during my study.

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## List of Abbreviations

ASKI	Αρχεία Σύγχρονης Κοινωνικής Ιστορίας Contemporary Social History Archives
AYE	Αρχείο του Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών Greek Foreign Ministry Archives
HEAL-Link	Σύνδεσμος Ελληνικών Ακαδημαϊκών Βιβλιοθηκών Hellenic Academic Libraries Association
TCBCA	Turkiye Cumhuriyeti Basbakanlik Cumhuriyet Arsivi Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Republic Archives
TBMM	Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi Grand National Assembly of Turkey
AAM	Ataturk Arastirmalari Merkezi Ataturk Research Center

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 General

This study examines the Greek-Turkish rapprochement under Venizelos and Ataturk's leadership and its influence on Balkan geopolitics. Greece and Turkey, which are two nations in Southwest Asia and the Balkans that have had empire experience in the past, have very long bilateral relations. However, the relations between Greeks and Turks, who lived together for many years and shared many common values as a result, are defined as one of the most adversarial relations of the world when the literature on international politics is taken into consideration. The first and perhaps the greatest exception of Greek-Turkish relations, expressed as established on policy based on rivalry, is the period of Venizelos and Ataturk, whose priority was not rivalry but alliance. Venizelos and Ataturk, who had a great majority of their political lives through wars and the traumas that they created, established an alliance period that can be considered as an example not only for Greek-Turkish rapprochement but also for the region and world political associations. Thanks to the pragmatist and constructive policies of the two leaders, Greek-Turkish relations lived the most important period of its history. The purpose of this work, which came out of this framework, is to reveal the influence of Venizelos and Ataturk on the Greek-Turkish rapprochement, that is outlined on the basis of the leadership ability of these two successful statesmen. This study also claims that the period of this alliance, which was founded by two leaders, is the most important period of Greek-Turkish relations. It is also suggested that, considering the ongoing developments, it is a crucial example for other problematic bilateral relations in the world.

### 1.2 Theoretical Framework

Before entering this study, it is first necessary to answer questions about 'What, How and Why'.

-*What:* In this work in general, it has been tried to study the Greek-Turkish rapprochement under the leadership of Venizelos and Ataturk and its indirect reflection on the Balkans. While conducting this review, the aim of this study is to uncover the influence of the two leaders on the relations of the two countries.

In particular, the main research question of this study is how Venizelos and Ataturk, as leaders, have an influence on the rapprochement between the two countries. For this purpose, some theories and analysis methods, which are considered to be compatible with this topic, have been used in this study.

-How: The most important of these are the hypotheses put forward by Kant. From this point of view, a brief explanation has been made for the purpose of showing the appropriateness of selected hypotheses, theories, and methods of analysis.

Immanuel Kant, one of the important theoreticians who contributed to international relations studies, foresaw the possibility of establishing lasting peace among the countries and attributed this to mutual non-aggression agreements or collective security agreements between countries. However since there are also aggressive states, he also emphasized that alliances should not be made with every state (Badie, Schlosser, & Morlino, 2011, pp. 1435-1436). In his work *Perpetual Peace*, Kant argues that the world is going to a new level on the basis of mutual respect, freedom and most importantly peace of the states. According to Kant, the most important phase of this new order, which aims to establish universal peace on earth, is the federations to be established among the countries (Hassner, 1987, p. 581). According to Kant's *Perpetual Peace* theory, Kant states that by allowing countries to freely circulate among themselves, the trading spirit will increase and thus create incentives for states to develop peace. As a result, he claims that the problems between states will be resolved in a peaceful manner and that their relations will not be completely broken (Badie et al., 1435-1436).

Moreover, according to the individual level-based analysis of Waltz, the relations between history and countries are not only determined by great social, political, economic power but also by powerful individuals (Bova, 2012, p. 76).

Therefore, in this framework, the initiatives that the two leaders made to improve Greek-Turkish rapprochement and ensure lasting peace will be highlighted in a historical overview under Kant's *Perpetual Peace* theory. This study also focused at Waltz's Individual level of analysis.

-Why: There have been numerous articles and books about Greek-Turkish rapprochement and many scientific meetings have been organized on this subject. However, as Tulca<sup>1</sup> points out,

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<sup>1</sup> Tulca, Enis (2016). *Venizelos-Ataturk and a Diplomat: Enis Bey*, Athens, Iason Books, p. 33.

the most important and, on the other hand, least recognized period of Greek-Turkish rapprochement is the Venizelos-Ataturk period, which covers 1928-1934. For this reason, this topic has been selected and this study has been done in order to contribute to the understanding more of this rapprochement period.

### **1.3 Structure of the Essay**

This work consists of five parts. The first part is devoted to introduction. In the second part of the study, Venizelos and Ataturk's getting on the stage of history, the roles of the two leaders in the Greek-Turkish internal and foreign politics until the Treaty of Lausanne will be examined in terms of a historical overview. In the third part, which is the main part of this work, it has been tried to examine the Greek-Turkish rapprochement which started after resolving the problems between the two countries and important developments that have taken place in this process from historical perspective. In addition, the most important problems left from Lausanne will be analyzed in this section on the basis of case studies of crises in the Patriarchate and population exchange. The reason why the two crisis periods are discussed in this chapter is that the national interests, which are constrained by the international system and local factors in crises, show more weight in the political choices of the countries (Lymberis, 1997, p. 11). In the fourth part, the rapprochement in Greek-Turkish relations and the effect of the alliance on the geopolitics of the Balkan peninsula have been analyzed. Finally, the last part consist of bibliography.

Thus, the periods that have been examined are divided as the following: in the second part the years from 1910 to 1923, when Venizelos returned to power; in the third part, the period between 1923 and 1934, when the relation reached its peak; the years from 1928 to 1934 have been examined. Also in these parts, in order to preserve the integrity of subject and meaning, developments in world and regional politics and some important personalities who have contributed to the development of bilateral relations have also been mentioned.

### **1.4 Sources**

In this study, secondary sources were used as resources. Many articles and books related to the subject were used. Most of the resources were created by using libraries in Athens. The Central Library of the Greek Parliament, the Gennadius Library, the Hellenic American Union Library,

the Panteion University Library, National Kapodistrian University of Athens Political Science-Turkish Studies and Contemporary Asian Studies Library, the Library of University of the Peloponnese Political Science, the Library of ASKI, HEAL-Link, Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center, AAM, TBMM Archives and the largest archive of Greece's about the subject of population exchange, Center for Asia Minor Studies, are among the libraries that were benefited from.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **COMING OF VENIZELOS AND ATATURK TO THE STAGE OF HISTORY AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN GREEK-TURKISH POLITICS (1910-1923)**

In this part, in order to ensure that the work is clearly understood, the answer to the question about what role Venizelos and Ataturk played in shaping modern Greece and Turkey is being searched. While doing this, the two leaders' coming on the history stage and their activities are being analyzed within the framework of developments in Greece, Turkey and the region.

### **2.1 Historical Background**

According to Pallis (1937), the most striking and spectacular statesmen of the 20th century are Venizelos and Mustafa Kemal that the Balkans raised. Mustafa Kemal, with his unusual political and military genius, first rescued his country from destruction and then began to revive it. For this reason, he earned the right to be one of the greatest statesmen of the world. As a brave innovator, he made radical reforms in the social and political arena to bring his country and nation to where they deserved in the world and he succeeded in enabling his country to win a respectable place in the civilized world (p. 194).

As a general opinion, Venizelos is regarded by all circles as a great statesman. Venizelos, thanks to its unique, great leadership qualities, unlike Mustafa Kemal, who is not known sufficiently in the Western world, is a leader that increased personal affluence and respectability in every field by establishing direct contact with Western countries in the last twenty years of his life. (Pallis, 1937, p.195; Price, 1917, p. 182).

Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) is the greatest statesman of Greek political history and the founder of the modern Greece (Kitromilides, 2008, p. 1). However, according to Greek people and politicians, the reason for the recognition of him as an important figure and having his name written among the world's greatest statesmen are not because of his achievements regarding new territories for Greece. It is because of his politics on the pragmatist line, which he never gave up on and which he always practiced during his life. As the leader of the Crete Revolution, Greece's reformist prime minister and a European diplomat, Eleftherios Venizelos proved to be a talented, great strategist, with the achievement of its goals as a result of his actions.

In addition, he is an important statesman that was influential on the Greek society, which was deeply divided in terms of politics, with the modernization policies he realized (Kitromilides, 2008, pp. 2-3). Right here, it is important to remember how Venizelos' political activities in Crete affected Greece's future internal and external policy.

Eleftherios Kyriakou Venizelos was born in 1864 in Mournes, a small village affiliated with the city of Chania (*Xaniá-Hanya*) in Crete (Macrakis, 2008, p. 39). As represented in the following Map 2.1 that the island of Crete, the birthplace of Venizelos, it gained autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in 1898 and lived as an autonomous state under Ottoman rule for 15 years. This situation did not last long and Crete joined Greece in October 1913 (Ker Lindsay, 2007, p.13; Macrakis, 2008, p.76).

**Map 2.1:** The Crete island



Source: <http://panhellastravel.com>

In the process of Crete becoming autonomous, Venizelos, declared a national hero by the Cretans, gained fame as a negotiator with the support he received from the Great Powers and the People (Macrakis, 2008, p. 72). The military administration which did Goudi coup in 1909 in Greece, invited Venizelos that was in Crete to Greece and offered him to head the council. Accepting the invitation, Venizelos came to Athens (Smith, 2008, p. 139). After 1878 Halepa Decree Venizelos, the leader of the Liberal Party in the Cretan parliament, continued his career after arriving in Athens. Shortly after, he established a new party called *Komma Phileleftherion* (Liberal Party) together with his close political friends (Katsiadakis, 2008, p. 99).

As it is understood from its name and emblem, this party is the continuation of Venizelos' political career in Crete.

In Greece foreign princes had ruled since its independence. Along with Venizelos, who was the first leader with Greek people and who came to Athens in 1909 and later won the elections, the country had a serious breakthrough and leap. Liberal Party leader Venizelos, improved the economy of the country, thanks to his administrative ability and reputation in the Western countries. After the 1909 military coup, he made structural reforms in the civilian and military bureaucracy by regulating to army. As a result, he enabled the country to triple its borders (Andreopoulos, 1981, p. 959; Tulca, 2016, p. 17).

It can be understood from the services Venizelos did for his country, why he was the most important person for Greece. The population of Greece increased from 600,000 to 2,650,000 from its foundation until 1907. With the participation of Thessalia and Ionian islands, half a million people were added to this population. Until 1915, Greece reached 41.993 square miles from 25.0142 in terms of soil and from 2.7 million to 4.8 million in terms of population (Veremis & Katsiadakis, 2008, p. 118). There is no doubt that Venizelos had a great contribution to the realization of this situation. However, he thought that the achievements made in military field were also supposed to be achieved in the field of education. Gibbons explained in his book, the works that Venizelos, who believed that the development and strengthening of the country depended on education, did in this field.

As Gibbons (1920) also pointed out, only 35% of the Greek population was literate when Venizelos came to Athens as prime minister. Although education is compulsory in the country, the inadequacy of schools led to the minority of literate population. For this reason in addition to allocating a large budget to the Ministry of Education, Venizelos enabled the opening of nearly two hundred new schools and investments were made to increase the effectiveness of the University of Athens (p. 167).

The presidency of Venizelos also left its mark on Greece's foreign policy. Thanks to this new leader, at the end of the Balkan wars, Greece grew in terms of both population and territory. However, when the First World War period arrived, we see *National Schism*, in other words the clash of the King and Venizelos, which is called the political strife, which had an important place in the modern history of Greece.



*National Schism* can be described as the struggle between the liberal party supporters in Greece, who are Venizelists, and the anti-Venizelist wing emerging as a different fraction against it.

It was about which side Greece was supposed to be on during the First World War (Sfikas, 1999, p. 225). Venizelos defended that Greece was supposed to enter the world war on the side of the Entente countries that Britain, France and Russia created. He had some logical reasons behind this idea. According to Klyvas (2015)'s findings, the Entente states, in particular England, made concessions to Venizelos about giving the western Anatolia to the Greek administration if they won the battle. Moreover, whatever the result of the world war, he regarded that to have a close relation with Britain was an indispensable necessity for Greece since England would continue to have its undeniable superiority in the seas.

Another important reason for Venizelos was the close relationship they had with Central Powers states, Bulgaria and Turkey (Ottoman Empire), which had irredentist ambitions on Greece. It is clearly seen that according to him, Greece gained all its achievements in terms of territory from cooperation with Entente States like England-France. For this reason, he considered that going into the war along side with the states led by Germany, to which Turkey and Bulgaria would be added in the future, would cause damage to Greece instead of benefit (p. 69).

On the other hand, King Constantine argued that Greece should enter into war with Germany otherwise remaining neutral would be the right choice. '*A small but honorable Greece*', which is the motto of the royalists represented the maintenance and continuation of the status quo of the privileged status that the territorial sovereignty and the citizens of Greece possessed as an independent state (Veremis & Katsiadakis, 2008, p. 119). This difference that Venizelos and King Constantine defended caused the country to experience an internal conflict in terms of politics and caused dissociation because of it.

During the elections held in June and December, the continuation of the conflicts and boycotts caused the country to be split in terms of administration: On one side, there was the Thessaloniki administration, founded under the leadership of Venizelos, in the heart of northern Greece Thessaloniki, which joined Greece as the result of the Balkan Wars and is therefore called '*New Territories*'. On the other side, there was the Government of Athens, ruled by the Royalists located in Athens on the southern territory of the so-called '*Old Greece*' (Kalyvas, 2015, p. 70). When this situation is taken into account, with Venizelos establishing the revolutionary

government in Thessaloniki in January 1916, it can be said that Greece was divided into two in terms of government (Tassopoulos, 2008, p. 262).

In summary, Venizelos argued that Britain would win the war as the First World War started and that Greece should enter into war with Britain because it could gain expansion opportunities in terms of territory as a result of this. On the other hand, King Constantine believed that Germany would win, and therefore he thought that Greece should remain neutral. Hence, King Constantine was overthrown in 1915 with the determination of Venizelos and the coalition against the King. This caused National Schism (*o ethnicos dichasmos*), which was a social and political polarization in Greece, to become deepened even more. After these developments, the victory of Venizelos in the elections held in 1916 strengthened his power. Soon after, Greece entered into the war alongside Britain (Veremis, 2003, p.53, Kalyvas, 2015, pp. 69-70).

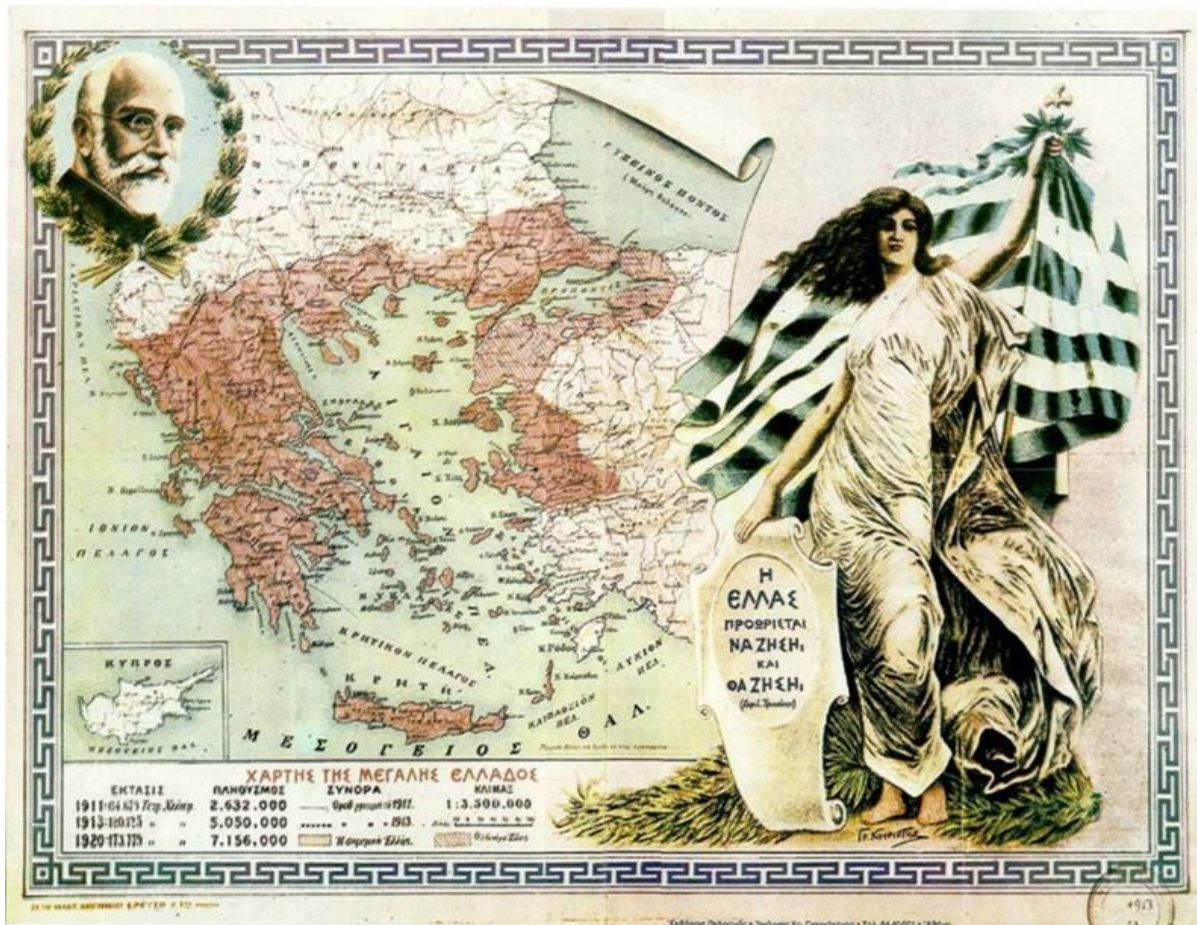
Another point to be mentioned here is that Venizelos was always active as a politician. Even in the period without political power, Venizelos, for example, after his resignation in 1915, until he established a temporary government in Thessaloniki, maintained close political ties with representatives of allies in Athens (Smith, 2008, p. 136).

National Schism, with its consequences, had a great influence on both Greece's internal and foreign policy. Political division within the country created an obstacle for Greece to maintain the world war in an effective manner with allied states. On the other hand, thanks to National Schism, the traditional party system has shaped in Greece; military government and state administration have strengthened and the opportunity for the emergence of modern Greek politics have made available (Kalyvas, 2015, p. 71).

When evaluated according to the conditions of the period, Venizelos' greatest success was to double the borders of his country by taking Izmir (Smyrna) and Eastern Thrace by means of his performance during the Sevres Treaty at a time when his country was deeply divided in terms of ideological standpoint.

This success influenced his Greek political life and enabled him to be accepted as the greatest genius and the founder of modern Greece (Pallis, 1937, p.195; Price, 1917, p.182). Following map 2 is showing that the Treaty of Sevres was also regarded as the founding of Great Greece, which is the *Greece of the two continents and five seas*, under the leadership of Venizelos, along with the precise Greek victory and the riveting of Venizelos' political splendor (Heraclides, 2010, p. 58).

**Map 2.2** Map of Greater Greece after the Treaty of Sevres when the Megali Idea seemed close to fulfillment, featuring Eleftherios Venizelos.



Source: [www.sakketosaggelos.gr](http://www.sakketosaggelos.gr)

Venizelos, described as the *greatest and most influential* leader (Tsolainos, 1919, p. 188) of the Conference in Paris, thought that the only way to achieve this goal was to preserve and expand the Greek achievements after the war. Moreover, being encouraged by America, France and especially Britain to intervene in Anatolia caused Greek government to feel that England would always back them up (Jelavich, 1983, p. 172).

Very surprisingly, Venizelos, who expanded Greece as a result of successful politics in foreign politics, was defeated in the election in 1920. In fact, there are some obvious factors in the occurrence of this result. The tiredness of people due to the ongoing wars, renovations made in the state by Venizelos supporters and voting of the majority of the minority population, who lived in the northern part of the so-called New Territories, in favour of the royalists caused liberals under the leadership of Venizelos to be defeated (Kalyvas, 2015, p. 72). Venizelos, who

failed to succeed in the 1920 elections, left the country after this event. However, he continued to pursue his political activities intensively in Europe.

After Venizelos stepped down and left the country, the most important question and problem that the new regime faced was what would the situation be in Anatolia. The Greek army in Anatolia made progress against the forces of Mustafa Kemal. However, the Great Powers did not have the consensus regarding the nationalists in Anatolia. Italy and France entered the process of recognizing the government of Ankara. The Greek government, still satisfied with the UK support, chose to continue to move forward instead of drawing the army from Asia Minor thinking that it was hard to capture this opportunity in the future (Jelavich, 1983, p. 173).

Greece, doubling its territory between 1912 and 1919, tried to maintain his expansion over Anatolia but as a result of the victory of Turkish War of Independence, led by Mustafa Kemal, Greece's expansion target in Anatolia was not realized (Hatzivassiliou, 1998, p. 90).

Within this frame it is necessary to provide information about Ataturk, one of the leaders of modern Greek-Turkish rapprochement.

The 20th century is considered as a period when states with multi-ethnic community structures such as Austria-Hungary and the Ottomans were fragmented and the modern nation-states were established. (Hirschon, 2003, p. 3). Ataturk, internalizing this evaluation, acted in the direction of the aim of creating a new, young and modern nation-state from the remains of the Ottomans in Anatolia. For this purpose he made numerous valuable reforms in the Turkish society, which had traditional, conservative characteristics and strived to bring this young newly established country to a position it deserved in the modern world (Cloudsley, 2014, p. 375).

The establishment phases of modern Turkey, born of Ataturk's intensive efforts, can be summarized as follows: As a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the Ottoman State withdrew from all the territory of the Balkan peninsula except for Eastern Thrace. As a result, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro expanded by sharing the land remaining from the Ottomans. In the First World War, Bulgaria and the Ottomans were allied to Germany whereas Greece and Serbia were allies of Britain. At the end of the war, Greece and Serbia had the opportunity to expand their territory a little further. The Ottoman State, on the other hand, was fragmented and lost a significant portion of its land. The Turkish War of Independence, which took place between 1919-22, caused the Great Western Powers to completely withdraw from Anatolia (Turkes, 1994, p. 123). From another point of view, as far as results are concerned, the Asia

Minore incident had a negative impact on Venizelos' achievement of territorial gains and institutional changes (Kitromilides, 2008, p. 4).

The war, which is known as *Asia Minor Catastrophe* in Greece and called *Turkish War of Independence* in Turkey, took place in Anatolia between 1919 and 1922 and it enabled Turkey to regenerate from the remains of the Ottomans whereas it ended the enlargement policy of Greece. The point that needs to be mentioned here is almost a century after the emergence of Independent Greece as a national state established as a result of the struggle with the Ottoman State, the independent Turkey was established as a national state as the result of struggle against Greece (Kalyvas, 2015, p. 73). Therefore, the independence of the two countries, as well as the establishment of their *Nation-States* were the result of struggles against each other and the two sides built their national identities on this basis.

As Heraclides (2010) put it, nations and nation-states struggled with their historical enemies and gained their independence by the war of independence they did against them. Greeks and Turks can not be evaluated outside this perspective. The two nation states built their national identity and the independence of their states on the bravery, struggle and sacrifice they had against the '*Other*' (p. 62). Ataturk, with the radical reform program he implemented, brought the newly emerging Turkey to the status of the only secular Muslim country in the world and he succeeded in bringing his country to the level of contemporary Western civilization (Keridis, 2014, p. 342). Moreover; being the leader of the first independence struggle against colonial states such as Britain, France and Italy, and achieving the victory set an example for other nations under colonial rule in the world.

Jameson, describes the change in Turkey under the leadership of Ataturk as '*(...) more radical and drastic, more colorful and concrete, more miraculous and meaningful, than they are elsewhere.*' (1936, p. 482).

According to Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, the principles that constitute the political philosophy of the new Turkish State such as Freedom, Secularism, Populism, Statism, Social Justice, Nationalism, Peace, Republicanism and Revolutionism would not be realized without kneading rationalism, scientific development, social-economic development, modernity with political independence and democracy and bringing all of them together. In order to achieve this and to create a new nation state, all these modern principles have been made by Ataturk as the basic principles of the *Turkish Revolution* (Ergul, 1981, p. 25). According to Greek Prime

Minister Venizelos, Atatürk made Turkey an integral part of Western civilization. On the basis of this, he stated that Turkey should be included in a union which would be formed in Europe in the future (Barlas & Guvenc, 2009, pp. 438-39).

In 1928, when Venizelos returned to power, he made radical reforms in the foreign policy of the country. The basis of Venizelos' foreign policy can be summarized in three ways: a) to keep his country away from a war that could start between the great powers in the future, b) To prevent the Balkan peninsula from being dominated by a single powerful state and c) the principles of eliminating the threats this would create against Greece (Hatzivassiliou, 1998, p. 95).

For this purpose, from 1928 onwards, Venizelos chose the way of forming alliances in Greek foreign policy to take measures against the revisionist states in the region. According to Clogg (1992), Venizelos, as a successful statesman, tried to establish good relations with neighboring states. His making friendship agreements with Italy and Yugoslavia is evidence of this. However, his biggest foreign policy success was to rearrange the relations with Turkey under the leadership of Atatürk (p. 109).

Venizelos took the initiative and the first step to establishing the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. This situation was described as Venizelos' greatest success in Greek foreign policy during his stay in power between 1928 and 1932 (Demirozu & Petsas, 2012, p. 66). Clark emphasized the new rapprochement process, whose architects were Venizelos and Atatürk, in Greek-Turkish relations with the sentences such as,

*"(...) for the two architects of Lausanne accord, Kemal and Venizelos, it made perfect sense, (...) Both leaders could see storm cloud gathering in Europe (...)"* (Clark, 2006, p. 204).

As a result of the rational policy that the two leaders are following, indeed, a situation that is difficult to be realized in the world diplomacy was implemented. Venizelos, who defended the interests of Greece at the Paris Peace Conference, he led to the realization of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement in 1930 thanks to the pragmatic policy he followed after the great battles (Kitromilides, 2008, p. 4). Venizelos expressed his thoughts on this subject as follows:

*"Turkey herself is the greatest enemy of the idea of the Ottoman Empire (...) She proceeds with the development of a homogenous Turkish national state. But we also, since the catastrophe of*

*Asia Minor, and since almost all our nationals from Turkey have come over the Greek territory, are occupied with a similar task'' (Clark, 2006, p. 216).*

The essence of Venizelos' statement above is to emphasize that Greece and Turkey are two states striving to become a one-nation, homogeneous and modern state structure from the multi-national, traditional society that comes from its historical heritage.

According to Smith, Venizelos conducted a remarkable diplomatic activity in terms of results between 1910 and 1923. As a result of the Balkan Wars, he achieved doubling Greece in terms of territory and population and as a result of the First World War, at the Paris Conference, he achieved consolidating and increasing these gains. Undoubtedly, there are many valuable people behind these achievements in political, administrative and military fields. However, the general belief was that the Greek nation owed all these gains to Venizelos' efforts. On the other hand, he caused Greece to take the first step in 1922 which resulted in the defeat in Asia Minor and removing of the Christian Greek population from Anatolia.

What is obvious is that Venizelos, in 1923, comprehended the certainty of defeat. For this reason, he conceiving that Greek-Turkish relations evolved into a new reality, quickly adapted to it. One of the most powerful aspects of Venizelos is that from a pragmatic point of view, he quickly understood and accepted the new situations in which political conditions emerged (Smith, 2008, p.135; Jelavich, 1983, p.172).

As a result, Greece had a major importance for Turkey in the first centuries of the Republic that Ataturk followed the regional policy. The establishment of Venizelos-Ataturk friendship benefited both countries. The convergence of Greece and Turkey as two key countries of the region in terms of geography led to steps taken to establish peace in the region, such as the Balkan Pact in 1934 and 1954.

In the next chapter, we will open a period of tension and rapprochement.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **GREEK-TURKISH RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE INFLUENCE OF VENIZELOS AND ATATURK ON THE RELATIONS (1923-1934)**

In this framework, this part which constitutes the main part of the study the answer is sought to the question about how Venizelos and Ataturk contributed to the rapprochement of the two countries between the years 1923-1934. For this purpose, the period of tension during this period and the period of rapprochement after that are tried to be analyzed within the main lines.

### **3.1 The Period Of Tension (1923-1928)**

Greek-Turkish relations were characterized as a zero-sum game in which generally rivalry was in the forefront (Tsarouhas, 2009, p.53; Anastasakis, 2004, p.45). The post-Lausanne period can be seen as a period when this opinion, which was a general opinion, made itself felt distinctly. The problems from Lausanne caused the rapprochement of the two countries to be delayed. However, the initiatives of the two leaders helped the problems between two countries to be solved.

#### **3.1.1 Lausanne Treaty and the Remaining Problems**

The signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923 led to the peaceful settlement of many important issues between Greece and Turkey (Ker Lindsay, 2007, p. 110). Inonu, who was invited to sign the agreement, signed it with his pen which was given to him by Mustafa Kemal for this purpose. This peace treaty consists of 141 items, ranging from the commercial area to the legal status of the Straits (Mango, 2002, p. 387).

However, Lausanne did not solve all the problems between the two countries. For this purpose, the two countries chose the way of diplomacy. To this end, an interesting development during the Lausanne negotiations was that Venizelos on behalf of the Greek side and Inonu on behalf of the Turkish side signed the population exchange agreement on 30 January 1923. According to the agreement, the two countries were obliged to give land and make payment to the population they exchanged equivalent to the immovable properties that they left behind (Balkan



Politics, 2008, p. 1714). Another decision taken on the solution of the problems was the change made on Article 2 of Lausanne. According to this change made by Venizelos and Inonu, Greeks living in Istanbul and Muslims in Western Thrace were allowed to continue their lives (Jones, 2014, p. 13). The Treaty of Lausanne made significant changes in the foreign policy of Greece. Klapsis (2013), stated that in the period between the two wars after the Lausanne Treaty signed in 1923, Greece, by changing its foreign policy, followed a policy aimed at fully protecting national security and territorial integrity. (p. 293).

In the post-Lausanne period, two problems that kept the two countries busy the most were the Patriarchate and the Population Exchange.

### **3.1.2 The Patriarchate Issue**

The place and importance of the church in the Ottoman Empire were great in the Orthodox community. Based on this reality, as Kitromilides stated, we can say that “ (...) *the Orthodox Church has been the only permanent institution in the life of the Orthodox peoples of Eastern Europe and the Middle East*” (Kitromilides, 1990, p. 10). By means of historical continuity, its playing the leading role in the preservation of cultural life, language and ancient memory (1990, p. 10), enabled it to maintain its existence as an institution that was accepted by everyone in the society.

At the Lausanne Conference, the Turkish side stated that the caliphate, a religious symbol, was abolished by the Ankara administration. Therefore, by stating that the Turkish state was no longer governed by a religious-based structure and that during the war the Patriarchate was leading some negative activities, they proposed to move Fener Greek Patriarchate out of Istanbul to Athos on Halkidiki peninsula in Greece (Bilge, 1998, p. 3).

Venizelos, who represented Greece in the negotiations, saw that the political situation in Turkey changed. Based on this reality, he informed the Turkish side that he was ready to accept the removal of all authority except religious affairs and churches with the condition that the Patriarchate remained in Istanbul (Bilge, 1998, p. 4). After the negotiations, both parties accepted this proposal. After the negotiations on the Patriarchate, Inonu declared the results as follows:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on this subject, please refer to: S. L. Meray, Lausanne Peace Conference, Tome, Ankara University, V. I, Part. I, p. 328.

*"We consider the official declarations made by the representatives of the Allied Forces and the representative of Greece- that the Patriarch would by no means get involved in political or administrative affairs. (...) We drop our request to remove the Patriarchate from Istanbul, on the condition that it remains within the limits described by these declarations"* (Bilge, 1998, p. 4).

With this status accepted regarding the Patriarchate, the problem on this subject was solved. However, in 1925, the two countries again suffered tensions due to the incident of Patriarch Constantine that was newly elected to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, and they came to the brink of a nearly harsh conflict. Based on the population exchange agreement with Greece, the Turkish side, stating that Constantine could not be excluded from the exchange because he had never lived in Istanbul since 1918, deported the newly elected patriarch (Clark, 2006, p. 211). This tension was resolved by Patriarch Constantine leaving office in May 1925.

To sum up, the point that needs to be mentioned here is the determination of Atatürk regarding this issue. İnönü, who was brought to the head of the Turkish delegation by Atatürk in the Lausanne Conference, expressed that there was no place for any religious institution with political and legal force, whether Muslim or Christian, in the new modern Turkish state and he demanded the Fener Greek Patriarchate in Istanbul to be sent to Greece (Aynaroz-Athos). However, on the insistence of other European states mainly Curzon, the head of the British delegation, a consensus reached on the continuation of the presence of the Patriarchate with the condition that it had no political and administrative functions (Clark, 2006, pp. 96-97).

### **3.1.3 Population Exchange Problem**

In fact, there has been some immigration from Anatolia to Greece before the great deal of population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey (Simpson, 1929, p. 583). However, the largest population change between the two countries was made with the decision taken in the Lausanne negotiations. The first proposal on population change was made by Venizelos. He, in 1922, submitted a proposal to Fridtjof Nansen, the High Commissioner for the Refugees of the League of Nations, for forced migration between the two sides under the auspices of the League of Nations (Shields, 2013, p. 4).

With the acceptance of the proposal, for Population Exchange in Istanbul a mixed commission was established consisting of the neutral representatives of the agreement states as well as Greek and Turkish representatives. This commission, which was formed between the parties, worked under the supervision of the League of Nations ( Blanchard , 1925, p. 451). According to the population exchange, approximately 1.3 million Greeks migrated from Turkey to Greece (Jelavich, 1983, p. 406). The aim of population change, like the European model, was to create a homogeneous nation-state in terms of ethnicity and religion that both sides had. (Shields, 2013, p. 5).

In 1923, the religion factor was used to define ethnic identity in forced exchange of population between Greece and Turkey. As a result, about 1.3 million people in Orthodox belief were sent to Greece and about 380 thousand Muslims, mostly from region of Macedonia in Greece and Crete, came to Turkey. According to the agreement, among the ones sent from Turkey there was a Turkish-speaking Orthodox society with Orthodox Greek belief, which lived in Central Anatolia, namely '*Karamanli*' in Turkish, '*Karamanlidhes*' in Greek. They were also separated from their homeland, just as it was on the both sides, and had to start everything from scratch in their new country (Mango, 2002, p. 390; Kalyvas, 2015, 74). It should be noted that population exchange caused some problems for both sides, regardless of whether they were Muslims or Orthodox Greeks. The fact that some immigrants, who were subject to forced immigration, did not even know the language of the country they arrived (Oran, p. 101; Shields, 2013, p.5) and that they were treated as foreigners by the locals of this new country caused these immigrants to live in great difficulties on the social scene. The examples of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Karamanlidhes, who came from Anatolia to the Greek mainland, and Greek-speaking Muslim Cretan Turks can be given to this situation ( Blanchard , 1925, p. 449).

Population exchange between Greece and Turkey also deeply affected the demographic situation of the two countries. Those from Turkey accounted for about 20% of Greece's total population whereas those coming from Greece accounted for about 3.8% of Turkey's population (Millas, 2003, p. 228). Venizelos, therefore regarded the refugees from Anatolia as crucial in terms of the future of Greece. According to Venizelos' politics, those who came from Asia Minor carried a veritable human potential in the Greek population's becoming the majority in demographic terms in the northern Macedonia and Western Thrace, which newly joined Greece. In a speech he made in October of 1922, he stated this policy as follows ( Kontogiorgi , 2003, p. 65):

*‘‘The very future of Greece is dependent on the success or failure of the solution of the refugee question. A failure would cause many calamities, while a success would allow Greece to recover(...) After the collapse of Greater Greece, we can consolidate the borders of Great Greece only when Macedonia and Western Thrace have become not only politically but also ethnically Greek lands.’’*<sup>3</sup>

As Keyder (2003) points out, the impact of population exchange on Greece was greater than in any case its impact on Turkey. Greeks, who came from Anatolia to Greece, were not significant in number only (one in four of the Greek population) at the same time, most of this population had a very high standard of living in terms of education and economic income. On the contrary, unlike the Greeks who went to Greece from Turkey, Muslims, who made up about 4% of Turkey's population at that time and came from mostly rural parts of Greece, did not have a great influence on Turkey's political and social development (p. 43). The influence of the population exchange was not only felt in social and economic sense but also the political area. There were almost 300,000 people, who were at the age with voting right, in the population that came from Anatolia and they had great influence on the election results in Greece until 1932 (Veremis, 2003, p. 56).

*‘‘The treaty has definitely settled the territorial issue between the two countries. Indeed, Turkey has ceased to be an empire in order to become a nation state, while Greece has completed her national unification’’* (Anastasiadou, 1980, p. 339). The fact that there was no longer a large ethnic minority in neither Greece nor Turkey prevented it from being used as an argument for expansionist politics for both sides. Hence, in terms of foreign policies, the concerns, interests and targets of the two countries basically coincided (Stefanidis, 2008, p. 220). The founding members of the new Turkey also wanted to maintain good relations that began during the Treaty of Lausanne with Greece.

In particular Mustafa Kemal, who aimed to establish a new nation state in the country and strives for the establishment of a homogeneous state, chose the way of peace settlement negotiations with its neighbors, especially Greece, to solve the problems. When Venizelos came to power in 1928, as a result of the agreement with Turkey, he quickly sought solution to the problems stemming from the problem of immovable property. Moreover, he defended making concessions to Turkey in order to bring the atmosphere of business unity to Balkan geography

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<sup>3</sup> *Istoriko Archeio tou Ypourgeiou Eksoterikon [Greek Foreign Ministry Archives]* (hereafter AYE), 1922/A/5(13), No. 3435, E. Venizelos to Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs, London, 17/10/1922.

and to ensure that the two countries have a focus on the real problems in their internal affairs (Clark, 2006, pp. 213-215).

Briefly, according to Demirozu and Petsas (2012, p. 61), at the time of the Lausanne Conference, the signing of an agreement and protocol on the exchange of population between the two countries on January 30, 1923 had a great importance especially in the social memory of Greece and the modern Greek identity. With Population Exchange about 380,000 Turks and 1.3 million Greeks were separated, by changing places, from the homeland they had lived for centuries (Jelavich, 1983, p. 174; Clogg, 1992, p. 101). Therefore, the process of building the two countries' own nation-states was very tiring and troublesome (Tsarouhas, 2009, p. 39). The exchange that was made is proof of this.

As a result, although the population exchange was not easy for both sides, but it helped to lift the centuries-old tension as well as the 'Venizelos-Ataturk period' spirit approved by both countries (History, geography and international law, 1979, p. 3).

### **3.2 The Rapprochement Period (1928-1934)**

As Ilksoy (2013, p. 5) explains, Greek-Turkish relations are generally defined as problematic. However, it would be more accurate to say that this relationship has up-and-down nature. Indeed, the fact that these two countries, who had been perceived as danger for each other in the most difficult periods of the world politics in the past, surprisingly came closer to each other and produced common policies was the greatest proof for this. There have been numerous articles and books about Greek-Turkish relations and numerous scientific meetings have held on this subject. However, as Tulca stated (2016), the most important and the least recognized period of Greek-Turkish rapprochement is the period of Venizelos-Ataturk which covers 1928-1934 (p. 33).

In this framework, it is necessary to analyze the reasons leading to the rapprochement of the two countries under the leadership of the two statesmen. According to Fotakis (2011), at the beginning of the 1930s the Greek foreign policy under Venizelos was based on two foundations: *a. not to feed irredentist policies against neighboring*; *b. not to have a close relationship with the great powers*. The Venizelos administration aimed to maintain the status quo on the borders of the country and in the Balkans (p. 56).

Mustafa Kemal's reconciliatory attitude has also found a positive response by Greek leader Venizelos. Venizelos, after coming back to power in 1928 in Greece followed a policy of opening a new page in the relation with Turkey and showed it through his actions. According to the perspective of Venizelos, there was no benefit to either side from hostility between Greece and Turkey, located on both sides of the Aegean (Alexandris, 1982, p. 157). In 1928, he formalized his thoughts about Turkey, which he shared with people during the election campaign, and established a relation with Turkey at the highest level.

For this reason, Venizelos sent the following letter to Inonu on August 30, 1928:

*‘Mr. President, in this moment that the Greek people entrusts upon me with a strong majority the leadership of its Government for a period of four years, I would like to assure you about my strong wish to contribute to the normalization of the relations between our two countries that (...) accepts sincerely and unreservedly the peace treaties’* (Kitsikis, 1969, p. 118).

After this message, Inonu sent a telegram stating that he had similar ideas and expressed his satisfaction with Venizelos' letter. As a result of the letter that Venizelos wrote to Inonu in 1928, he moved the softening process of the two countries forward to an even better level and Venizelos paved the way for his visit to Turkey in 1930. After the visit of the Greek leader to Turkey, Inonu spoke in the National Assembly on June 17, 1930 and expressed his views on Venizelos and Greece as follows: (Demirozu & Petsas, 2012, p. 69)

*“When working with Mr. Venizelos in Lausanne, I especially paid attention to one certain point, that he was very strict, hard working and formidable regarding problems relating to the interests of Greece, while he was not involved in any issue that was not related to Greece and might harm Turkey. Our observation from the first day was that there were no major conflict between the major interests (...).”<sup>4</sup>*

Based on this, it is not wrong to say that the Italian threat triggered the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. The fact that, on one hand, Greece is neighbor with Italy from the sea on the northwest border and on the other hand, the Dodecanese islands, immediately next to the Western Anatolian coast, were under the Italian occupation made Greece and Turkey face the threat of the same country: Italy (Millman, 1995, p. 485). In addition, Greece attempted to reorganize its relations with its neighbors, particularly in order to secure its northern borders.

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<sup>4</sup> Inonu's speech in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, *Parliamentary Proceedings of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey*, vol. 20, p. 271, Ankara 1930.

Population exchange with Turkey and problems arising from immigrants' property delayed the signing of the final agreement on this issue and caused the negotiations to grow longer (Dontas, 1987, p. 83). Solving the problems between the two countries after the Treaty of Lausanne enabled Greece and Turkey to get close on a pragmatic basis under the leadership of Venizelos and Ataturk (Gurkan, 1982, pp. 349-350).

As Stefanidis (2008) noted, the new ethnic structure and the geographical border reality that emerged after the Treaty of Lausanne gave Venizelos the idea that the hostility, which had been going on for many years, between Greece and Turkey had to end (p. 220). In addition, taking the changing balances in Europe into consideration, Venizelos, who saw that Greece suffered great losses both economically and socially during recent wars (Balkan, World War I and Anatolia), thought that ensuring the peace and prosperity of both his country and geopolitically the Balkans depended on cooperation with modern Turkey.

As a result, Venizelos, who won the overwhelming majority of the elections in 1928, chose to follow a moderate policy during the years that he held power, until 1933. He put in place some reforms within the country. Establishment of the Agricultural Bank to enable the farmers to obtain suitable credit facilities and the opening of a large number of public schools (Jelavich, 1983, p. 175; Katsiadakis, 2008, pp. 100-101).

However, Venizelos made pragmatic decisions for Greece based on the changing political conditions after the Lausanne, as the most ardent supporter of the Megali Idea mentality, which had a profound and deep meaning for the history, culture and social life of his country. One of Venizelos' greatest achievements in this period was his efforts to re-evaluate relations with Turkey and his leader, Ataturk, whom he had recently fought a fierce battle with, and to draw closer to it.

Venizelos, in 1928, became the undisputed pioneer of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement after writing and sending a letter to Inonu. He was a great statesman who managed to establish surprisingly good relations within the framework of mutual respect with Turkey and its leader, who had defeated his country in the war and were regarded as enemies by its people.

### **3.2.1 Venizelos' Turkey Travel:**

#### **3.2.1.1 Preparation Phase of the Visit**

Venizelos, who saw the necessity of opening a new page in Greek-Turkish relations, visited Ankara for this and in order to sign a friendship agreement with Turkey (Karamanlis, 1995, p. 85).

Venizelos, in 1928 by winning the general elections in Greece, gave great importance to develop relations with Turkey. After the sincere letter that Venizelos wrote to Ankara, the negotiations accelerated and the Turkish side invited Venizelos to Ankara. He saw this invitation as a great opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the population exchange problem, which had been one of the important obstacles in front of the normalization of the relations between the two countries and had been ongoing since the Treaty of Lausanne, by meeting Turkish authorities in person, especially Ataturk, in Ankara.

Although Venizelos looked positively at the invitation from Ankara and was eager to pay a visit to Turkey shortly, he was afraid of the opposition that could occur in the Greek parliament and the public pressure. Therefore, with the words of Tulca, Venizelos preferred to wait for the conditions to mature as a result of a ‘*driving force, a diplomatic movement*’ (2016, p. 45). The diplomatic movement expected by Venizelos came from the Turks. The Greek National Day, celebrated every year on 25 March in Greece, had a different meaning in 1930 and it had a big importance. It was because the 25 March 1930 celebration of the Greek National Day was the 100th anniversary of Greece's gaining independence from the Ottomans.

Therefore, the Greek government organized 100th anniversary celebrations in the city of Messologhi, an important place where the struggle for independence from the Ottomans started.

Although all foreign representatives in Athens were invited to this ceremony, no invitation was made to the Turkish embassy. Enis Akaygen, the Turkish ambassador in Athens, discussed the situation with Ankara via telegraph and as a result of Ataturk's directives and initiative, he made a great gesture to Greece by participating in these ceremonies in Messologhi city (Tulca, p. 45). As a result of the accelerated negotiations after this diplomatic gesture, both sides agreed on the solution of the problems arising from the situation of immigrant properties. This positive atmosphere that emerged, created the right time for Venizelos' visit to Turkey.



Briefly, Ataturk accelerated the relation with the appointment of Enis Akaygen, an important diplomat, as Turkey's ambassador to Athens in 1929. Venizelos responded by appointing an ambassador to Ankara. In the same year, Enis Akaygen, the Turkish ambassador in Athens, became Turkey's first ambassador to attend Greece's Independence Day, 25 March. A year later, the two countries solved problems stemming from population exchange through the Ankara Agreement (Demirozu & Petsas, 2012, pp. 71-72). These developments brought the two countries closer to each other after 1930, and a cooperative atmosphere was created.

### **3.2.1.2 Ankara Travel**

Venizelos visited Turkey after the Greek and Turkish sides agreed on the solution of the exchange properties problem. The point that should not be forgotten here is that the visit of Venizelos coincided with the Turkish National Day, 29 October (Demirozu & Petsas, 2012, p.74; Jelavich, 1983, p.177). This time for his visit to Turkey, Venizelos chose the Republic Day Week; which was between 27 October-1 November, and an important day for Turkey, 29 October Republic Day, was being celebrated.

Venizelos also made a connection with the Turkish embassy in Athens through diplomats as he wanted to make a significant route change in his visit to Ankara. During the meeting Venizelos stated that instead of going to Istanbul from the port of Piraeus by ship, he wanted to go to Ankara by train by disembarking directly from the port of Izmit without stopping in Istanbul.

Venizelos did not want to go to Istanbul because he thought he would have to visit the Fener Greek Patriarchate in case he visited Istanbul and that this would lead to Ankara's reaction. When Ataturk learned this, he sent a message to the Greek side through the Turkish embassy in Athens. Stated that Venizelos could visit the Patriarchate if he wanted (Karamanlis, 1995, p. 85) and that it would in no way damage the Greek-Turkish relations, so in this way he made a second gesture to Venizelos. Venizelos visited the Patriarchate in Istanbul on his way from Ankara to Greece and responded to Ataturk with a diplomatic counter-gesture (Tulca, p. 46). Venizelos came to Istanbul after Ankara between 27-31 October, and thus became the first Greek Prime Minister to visit Ankara and the Orthodox Patriarchate (Demirozu & Petsas, p. 78).

In his work on the period of Venizelos' foreign policy (Karamanlis, 1995, p. 85), Kostas Karamanlis, former prime minister of Greece, emphasized that Venizelos, who was regarded as the architect of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement, was welcomed in Ankara with a very

enthusiastic ceremony by the Turkish government. With Ataturk's directives, a very warm welcome ceremony was prepared for Venizelos who visited Turkey in the 7th anniversary ceremonies of the Republic of Turkey. For Venizelos all the streets of Ankara were decorated with Greek flags (Clark, 2006, pp. 201-202).

The impact of this visit was also reflected in the newspapers. The newspapers regarded Venizelos' visit as the biggest event of Turkey's rapprochement with Greece. Everywhere was decorated with Greek and Turkish flags and people shouted at the streets in Greek: "*Zito o Venizelos*" (Long live Venizelos) (Demirozu & Petsas, p. 79). Venizelos's wife, Helena, who was at his side during his visit to Turkey, stated that she was very impressed by the rapid change that took place in Turkish society. She noted that Turkish women were well-dressed, wearing high-heeled shoes and going to tea gardens as an equal individual in society. During this visit, Ataturk danced with Helena in the Republic Ball and gave two Ankara cats as a present to her (Dalby, 2011, p. 150).

**Figure 3.1:** President of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Prime Minister of Greece Eleftherios Venizelos attend Republic Day celebrations on October 29, 1930 in Turkey.



Source: egedesentez.com

Important agreements were made between Venizelos and Ataturk who met in Ankara. During these talks, when Ataturk appreciated the Greek army, he was touched and said he wanted to share it with Greek public. Ataturk responded positively to this demand (Us, 1966, p. 10). As figure 3.1 (above) shows that only even this situation is enough to tell the sincere level that Greek-Turkish relation reached thanks to the matureness of the two leaders. Moreover, Venizelos has also made serious interviews with Inonu as it is in the figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2:** Discussing Venizelos with Inonu during his Turkey visit, 1930.



Source: <http://infognomonpolitics.blogspot.gr>

Another point that needs to be mentioned here is that during his meeting with Ataturk in Ankara, Venizelos also seriously discussed the idea of establishing a possible confederation between Greece and Turkey like Switzerland (Clark, 2006, pp. 201-202). After his meeting with Ataturk in 1931, Leon Maccas<sup>5</sup>, one of the most important Greek diplomats stated his opinion as follows: “*Kemal was the apostle (...) of a large Greek-Turkish Empire in the East, a double-headed empire with two administrative capitals and one cultural capital, the Augustian city which was successively called Buzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul and which will always remain, by its very geographical position, the Queen City of the entire Eastern World (...)*” (Kypraios, 2015, p. 59).

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<sup>5</sup> Maccas, L. (1938), ‘Ataturk et Inonu, à travers quelques souvenirs personnels’, Les Balkans, X-4, Athens. Also cited in Kitsikis, D. *Ιστορία τοῦ ἑλληνοτουρκικοῦ χώρου, 1928-1973* [A History of the Greek-Turkish Area, 1928-1973], 2nd edition (with additions), Hestia, Athens, p. 27.

*“I am particularly pleased with the official visits of the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs’ (... ) friend Greece to Ankara. The higher interests of Turkey and Greece have entirely ceased to be in opposite directions. The sincere amity of these two countries provides a security and strength for both of them. The documents which contract the new principles of the new period beginning between the two republics have been presented for our final approval”*

In this talk Mustafa Kemal made at the inauguration of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 1 November 1930, he evaluated the Greek-Turkish Agreement and Prime Minister Venizelos's visit to Ankara as a turning point and a completely new beginning in terms of rapprochement between the two countries. These two countries, which experienced problems due to conflicts of interest in the past, stated that past problems ended with this agreement (Demirozu & Petsas, 2012, pp. 78-79).

Consequently, the Greek Prime Minister Venizelos' visit to Ankara in 1930 enabled the problems remaining from Lausanne to come to an end, as a result of the agreements made between the two states. This situation led to the opportunity to establish an anti-revisionist front with Turkey in the Balkans, which constituted the basis of Greece's foreign policy, against any status quo change (Klapisis, 2015, p. 85).

### **3.2.2 Signing of the 1930 Greek-Turkish Agreements**

The signing of the Ankara Agreement between Greece and Turkey on 10 June 1930, helped to overcome problems related to population exchange which were ongoing since 1923 and make a decision about it. The exchange of property rights, the biggest obstacle in front of the establishment of good relations between Greece and Turkey have finally been resolved with the Ankara Agreement thanks to the efforts of two great leaders (Oran, 2003, p. 101). Also, after long negotiations, the Friendship, Impartiality and Reconciliation Agreement was signed between Greece and Turkey on 30 October 1930 in Ankara. This agreement was described as a great victory of the reconciliation and rapprochement efforts of these two countries, which regarded each other as ‘*eternal enemies*’ under the leadership of Venizelos and Mustafa Kemal (Sonyel, 1989, p. 156). According to Raymond Hare<sup>6</sup>, who evaluated this agreement, while Greece was the side which gained economically but lost politically, Turkey was the side which

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond Hare, Special report, ‘*The Origin and Development of the Greco-Turkish Exchange of Populations Question*’ (1930), document no. 767.68115/143, p. 132.

lost economically but gained politically (Aktar, 2003, p. 80). As the figure 3.3 pointed out, during his visit Venizelos, also visited TBMM.

**Figure 3.3:** Venizelos, Ataturk leaving the exit of the Assembly, TBMM. October 29, 1930 – Ankara



Source: <http://lcivelekoglu.blogspot.gr>

In addition to the Friendship Agreement signed in Ankara between Greece and Turkey on October 1930, the Naval Weapons Agreement was also signed. Venizelos has seen that it was not possible to war against Turkey, which was in favor of continuing the statusquo in the Balkan peninsula, like Greece. In order to eliminate the danger from the sea during a possible war with Britain or another major European state, he argued that Greece should pay more attention to small light vessels instead of the order of a new war ship, which would bring heavy burdens to Greece in terms of economy. Also, he voiced his opinion that it would be more appropriate to invest in the development of the northern territories, are the newly joined territories in Greece, instead of buying a costly war ship (Hatzivassiliou, 1998).

As Hatzivassiliou (1998) interpreted, the sea is everything for Greece. When the geographical characteristics of the country are taken into account, the country has a long shoreline and coasts to various seas and when the political borders of the country are considered, it lacks continental depth which makes it insufficient for defense. Therefore, the priority of Greece is to give importance to naval power. Moreover, based on the existence of a large number of islands that the country has, and the necessity of making contact with these islands in the event of a possible

war, it can be better understood why the Greek government signed an agreement on naval weapons with Turkey.

In addition, when the geopolitical position of Greece is addressed, its closeness to Italy, which was strong in terms of naval power and continuing its invasion through Corfu Island in the west and Dodecanese in the east, rightly worried Venizelos administration (Hatzivassiliou, 1998, p. 91). In this context, according to Hatzivassiliou (p. 106), the signing of the Agreement on Naval Weapons in Ankara in 1930 constituted one of the most important cornerstone of Greek-Turkish rapprochement. With this agreement, Greece and Turkey would be protected from competition in the navy armament, which could cause collapse for both countries in terms of economy (p. 106).

Another reasons for signing this agreement are as follows: Both of the countries wanted to protect the status quo on the Balkan peninsula; they did not claim rights on each other's territory, followed a respectful policy towards each other's land; Greece and Turkey desired to avoid any arming race that could possibly emerge and they thought that long-term cooperation could be created (Hatzivassiliou, 1998, p. 89).

Briefly, with these treaties, Greece and Turkey agreed and committed not to participate in any political alliance against each other and to solve all their problems through peaceful ways.

### **3.2.3 The Nomination of Ataturk by Venizelos for the Nobel**

Venizelos always appreciated Ataturk's efforts to make peace active in the region. He went even further on this subject and nominated Ataturk for the Nobel Peace Prize on 12 January 1934 (Clogg, 1992, p. 109).

*" (...) We, the Greeks, (...) this re-rapprochement activity, showing that even the peoples with the deepest differences, when they are full of sincere peace, can come close again, was useful both for maintaining peace in both countries and in the Near East. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the President of the Republic of Turkey, is of course the person who made this invaluable contribution to peace building. Therefore, I am honored to propose that (...) would require Mustafa Kemal Pasha to be awarded in a distinctive respect for having the Nobel Peace Prize."*<sup>7</sup>

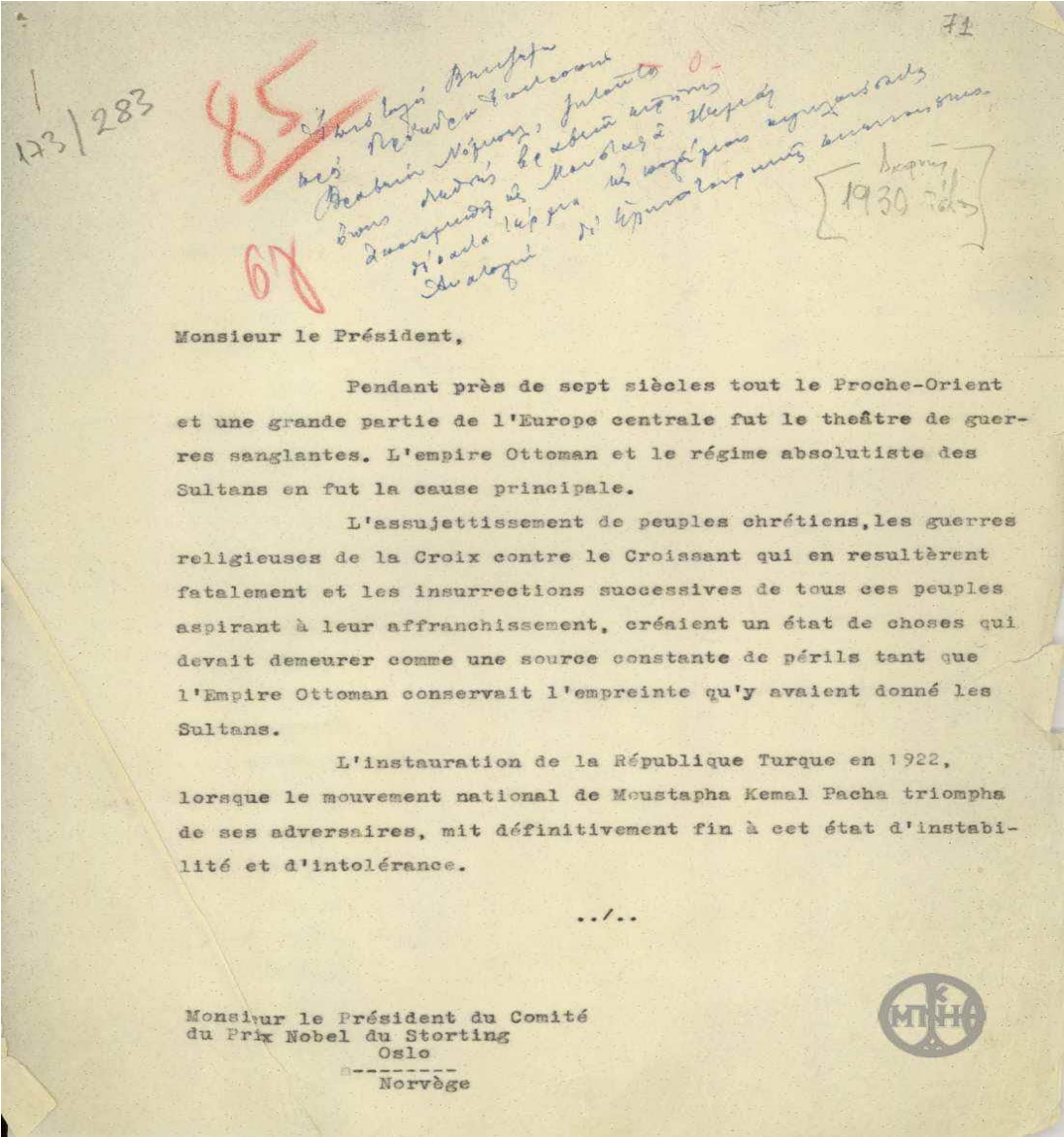
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<sup>7</sup> Benaki Museum, Eleftherios Venizelos File, Folder 283-71.



The fact that Venizelos nominated Ataturk as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, which as seen in the original letter in figure 3.4, with these words was one of the most important developments in the removal of psychological obstacles between Greece and Turkey. What should be remembered here is that the Greek leader Venizelos nominated Ataturk, who had defeated the Greek army in the 1919-1922 war, to the Nobel (Ilksoy, 2013, p. 7).

**Figure 3.4:** Letter of E. Venizelos to the President of the Nobel Prize Committee on the award of the Peace Prize to Mustafa Kemal.



Source: Benaki Museum

Moreover, the fact that these two countries, which had fought each other a short time ago, played a pivotal role in establishing the Balkan Pact and agreeing on the stability of the Balkans, once again showed how important Venizelos and Ataturk were in the politics of both their countries and in the region.

In addition, in the following figure 3.5 shows that the house of Atatürk, born in Thessaloniki, was donated to the Turkish State and put a sign on the entrance describing Atatürk as the ‘*Architecture of the Balkan Pact*’ (Mango, 2002, p. 487). These developments are important because they show how far two countries' relation progressed within the context of two leaders.

**Figure 3.5:** Sign at the door of the house where Atatürk was born. Thessaloniki, Greece.



Source: <http://www.ntv.com.tr>

### 3.3 Other Developments

Following the Friendship Agreement signed in 1930, some developments occurred due to the warm relation between Greece and Turkey. The most important of these was İnönü's visit to Athens. When (Xronou, 2015) İnönü visited Athens with the directives of Atatürk, a year after the visit of Venizelos, in 1931 was welcomed very warmly by the Greek delegation and its people, the Greek-Turkish relation entered into an unprecedented rapprochement period.

Furthermore, Greece's new Prime Minister Tsaldaris and Foreign Minister Maksimos visited Ankara on September 1933 after the Greek-Turkish Friendship, Peace, Neutrality and Reconciliation Agreements were signed during the visit of Venizelos to Ankara in 1930. Also, this time in 1933, the Friendship Agreement was signed between Greek Prime Minister Tsaldaris & Foreign Minister Maksimos and Atatürk & Turkish Foreign Minister Aras.



These treaties, signed for the second time in three years, are extremely striking in terms of the extent of Greek-Turkish rapprochement (Tulca, 2016, p. 57).

Ataturk's administration strived to prevent the Balkan states from being used by the great European states. For this purpose, the Treaty of '*Entente Cordiale*' which secured the borders of the two countries, was signed in September 1933 with the Greek government which had the same opinion about the Balkans (Barlas, 2005, p. 446). From this point of view, also in 1934 there were remarkable developments that brought the two countries close even more. This was achieved through the Greek-Turkish rapprochement, whose foundation was laid by Venizelos and Ataturk in 1930. It is necessary to talk briefly about the political, cultural and diplomatic influences created by this rapprochement on the region.

The geo-political effect was that right beside Europe, which came to a boiling in terms of politics, Balkan Pact was founded in the peninsula. It was established on 9 February 1934, under the leadership of Greece and Turkey.

Secondly, the development which was in terms of cultural influence. On 12 January 1934, Venizelos sent a letter, which he himself wrote in French, to the Nobel prize organization in Norway. What makes this letter important is that Venizelos, in this long letter he wrote, nominated Ataturk for the Nobel Peace Prize (Tulca, 2016, p. 60).

The third was the surprising developments in the diplomatic context between Greece and Turkey. Mr. Enis, the successful Ambassador of Athens who was appointed by Ataturk to Greece, was appointed to Iran, Tehran, from Athens as the Turkish Ambassador in 1934. Upon this development, The Greek government applied to Mr. Enis, who was very popular among the Greeks during his years in Athens, and Turkish Foreign Affairs. They requested the Turkish Embassy in Tehran, which was under the management of Mr. Enis, to protect the rights of Greek citizens living in Iran and to carry out diplomatic operations in Iran since a significant number of Greek citizens were living there; however, no Greek representative existed.

This surprising desire was welcomed and sincerely accepted by Turkish Foreign Affairs. As Tulca (2016) stated, due to the increase of the work load of Greek citizens over the years in the Turkish diplomatic embassy in Iran, in 1937 completely separate budget, income and expense accounts were opened by Turkey for the transactions of Greek citizens. This development was reported to the Greek government. Moreover, the surplus income in this application was transferred to the account of Greece's Embassy of Beirut in Lebanon every three months through

the Central Bank of Iran. In 1934, Venizelos expressed his gratitude to Mr. Enis for looking after the rights of Greek citizens and for protecting the interests of Greece; and Ataturk also expressed his gratitude for his contributions to Greek-Turkish rapprochement (p. 73).

The friendship of Greece and Turkey had a vital importance not only in the Balkans, but also in the Caucasus and the Middle East in bringing peace, tranquility and stability. As Tulca (2016) noted, 60 years before French-German rapprochement, which all countries appreciated and exemplified in the 1980s, Greece and Turkey realized this precedent thanks to the pragmatic policy of the two statesmen (p. 15). At this level that Greek-Turkish relation reached undoubtedly very great in this development, which is rare in the history of world diplomacy.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS ON THE BALKANS

In this section, the relationship between Greece and Turkey, the geopolitics of the Balkans will be examined. The basic research question of this part is what influence the policies followed by Venizelos and Ataturk had on Balkan geopolitics.

### 4.1 Geopolitics of the Balkans

Geopolitics is one of the most important parts of geography which has a vital effect on relations between countries as well as the decisions made by politicians in the field of domestic and foreign policy (Bagci & Doganlar, 2009, p. 98).

The Balkan peninsula took its name from the word Balkan<sup>8</sup>, which means mountain, mountainous area in Turkish. The Balkan is mountainous and with areas of various sizes, isolated from each other (Roucek, 1935, p. 288). From a geographical point of view, The Balkan Peninsula is a bridge between Europe, Asia and the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Considering its geopolitical and topographical position, it is inevitable that these lands face various problems (Roucek, 1935, p. 287). In this framework there is no definite natural border separating the Balkan Peninsula from Central Europe. In other words, there are no natural and definite boundaries like the Alps that separate the Italian peninsula from the European mainland, or the Pyrenees that separate the Iberian peninsula (Roucek, p. 287). Geographically, the peninsula is like the continuation of Central Europe. Hence, the Balkans were directly affected by the political and geopolitical developments that took place in Europe. If we look at the past, we see that this claim is proved by the fact that Balkans were often subject to the intervention of great European states especially because they had a significant place in the politics of these states.

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<sup>8</sup>Another meaning of the Balkan word in Turkish; *Bal*: Honey; *Kan*: Blood. In the past, the Balkans had been desired to be seized by many nations, and thus had been the scene of many bloody wars. So these sweet, fertile lands as sweet as *bal* (Honey) had been watered with *kan* (Blood). Balkans, made up of the combination of these two opposite words in meaning, unfortunately have a history filled with problems, wars and tensions just like its name.

**Map 4.1:** The Balkan Peninsula, Greece and Turkey



Source: <http://itravelfirst.com>

As Fenko (2010, p. 71) argues, since Balkan Peninsula, as part of the Mediterranean, has an important strategic and geopolitical position, it has made it become an indispensable factor in the regional politics (Map 4.1).

Here, if the focus is on the position of Greece and Turkey, the geographical region that should be mentioned is the Aegean. From a geopolitical point of view, the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey represents a geographical union. It, with a number of islands, high hills and strategic harbors, has a characteristic that combines the people of two mainlands (Greek and Anatolian peninsula), instead of separating them (Battle, 1920, p. 3). In this frame, in the next parts it will be tried to explain what kind of effects geography, politics and geopolitics, based on Greek-Turkish rapprochement, have on the Balkans.

## **4.2 Balkan Conferences and Balkan Entente**

We should analyse about the geopolitical situation of the region on the way to the Balkan Antante. By 1923, two different state groups had emerged in the Balkans. Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania emerged as '*satisfied*' states, in terms of expanding their territories as a result of

wars and regional territorial gains. On the other hand, as a result of the loss of land, that is to say, '*unsatisfied*' states emerged due to geographically shrinking, such as: Bulgaria.

The states in this group were not limited to small and powerless states like Bulgaria; they also appeared in Europe, outside the borders of the Balkan peninsula. Germany and Italy were leading of these. This new situation between the revisionist states, which were aligned with European great powers, pursuing expansionist policies against their neighbors, and the anti-revisionist states, which supported the unity and continuity of the status quo established at the end of the First World War, threatened the geopolitics of Europe as much as the geopolitics of the Balkans (Seton-Watson, 1937, p. 76; Turkes, 1994, pp. 123-124; Lopandic & Kronja, 2011 p. 22).

It would be better to look from the perspective of geopolitics regarding Venizelos' politics in this period. Geopolitics became one of the most important parameters affecting Greece's foreign policy under Venizelos leadership in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as being an important factor shaping the policies of many states in the world today. As Hatzivassiliou (1998, p. 92) expressed; in terms of its geopolitical position in the Balkan Peninsula, due to being in a very important but unprotected and vulnerable region because of it is surrounded by the sea, Greece had to make a comprehensive alliance with a suitable ally to solve the '*continental and maritime*' security problem. From the perspective of the European Great Powers, any state in the Balkans being driven by a powerful European country meant the change of status quo in the peninsula.

Another view of Venizelos, in order to stop Greece from being part of Western imperialism and to prevent the imperialists from using the country more for political purposes, saw the necessity of putting a distance between his country and the great powers of Europe. The Greek Government was very disturbed by the fact that Italy annexed the Sasseno (Cassavetes, 1921, p. 3) and Corfu islands, which have a very strategic importance as the point where the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea meet, as well as Italy's declaration of its claims on the Greek mainland via Albania.

As is seen in the following Map 4.2 that the all show the influence of the geopolitics of Balkans' on the politics of the countries: Italy's possession of the Dodecanese Islands; the possibility of Italy's becoming a threat to the western coast of Anatolia if it seized some of the Greek islands and on Greece; also Italy's desire to occupy Yugoslavia.

**Map 4.2:** Italian danger on Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia



Source: [www.bosnakmedya.com](http://www.bosnakmedya.com)

Moreover, Yugoslavia's desire over Thessaloniki caused security concerns for Greece. As a result, the Venizelos administration signed a friendship treaty with Italy in 1928. Any state in the Balkans being backed up by a large European state, especially a revisionist state like Italy had the potential to change all the balances on the Balkan Peninsula strategically. France, worried that Greece could get closer to Italy because of the Yugoslav crisis, trying to restrain Yugoslavia's demands on Thessalonica, made great efforts and contributed to the signing of the '*The Greek-Yugoslav Pact of Friendship*' in March 1929 (Hatzivassiliou, 1998, p. 96).

Greece had to follow a policy of equal distance against geopolitically two major rivalries, such as Italy with a strong navy power and Yugoslavia with desire to increase its hegemony on the peninsula, and it should not have a close political relationship with any country for the purpose of security. In short, Greece's agreements with these two countries did not fully meet Venizelos administration's security concerns. The reason why Greece, led by Venizelos got close to Turkey, under the leadership of Ataturk, and why he made an effort for it can be understood from this geopolitical and geostrategic point of view.

Turkey was one of the great states of the Balkans, who favored the preservation of the status quo in the Balkans. Furthermore, Turkey was the only regional power that could cooperate with Greece on its need to meet its land and maritime security needs without being dependent on it. Viewed from a geopolitical perspective, the Athens administration viewed Greek-Turkish cooperation as the greatest deterrent parameter that prevented the Balkans from being under hegemony of a single power by Yugoslavia or Bulgaria (Hatzivassiliou, 1998, pp. 96-97).

Venizelos, who strongly believed that Greece and Turkey had to cooperate and act together to protect both their own and the Balkans security, put this policy into practice, especially with agreements with Turkey in 1930.

Bulgaria followed a revisionist policy, Yugoslavia had ambitions to become a hegemonic power in the region and problems were being experienced with the Tirana due to the Greek minority living in the south of Albania. Turkey, which is in favor of the status quo and peace keeping, was the only neighboring country of Greece that did not pursue an expansionist policy against Greece (Stefanidis, 2008, p. 220).

Therefore, Greece and Turkey between 1930-33, both to get rid of the adverse effects of the economic crisis that the year 1929 created and to avoid the cyclical balances that have changed in world politics, played a leading role in the realization of the Balkan Conferences to establish a possible Union in the Balkans (Fenko, 2010, p. 77).

This new situation that emerged as a result of the shaking of the political balance in Europe by the Great Powers undoubtedly influenced the Balkans. As Jelavich (1983) notes, for the first time, the Balkan states have found opportunities to develop bilateral relations with each other in order to protect their common interest in the peninsula (p. 212).

To this end, the Greek government felt it necessary to participate in the Entente, which was being tried to be established, even if Bulgaria was not included due to the balances that had changed in the Balkans. Participation in the Entente would prevent the possible political isolation of the country from the region and more importantly the possible Bulgarian-Yugoslav rapprochement (Koliopoulos, 2008, p. 239).

Also, it would not be wrong to say that the basis of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement was laid by Venizelos and Atatürk, who had a fully pragmatic politics and high leadership qualities. (Stefanidis, 2008). The greatest proof of this was that Venizelos, while returning to Crete from



his treatment in Europe, came to Turkey for the second time on September 26, 1933 and had a meeting with Ataturk in Istanbul. The two leaders evaluated the rapprochement of the two countries, and more importantly, the recent developments in the establishment of the Balkan Pact and together they defined its basic principles (Tulca, 2016, p. 58). In this process, Venizelos and Ataturk saw each other as a trusted and sincere ally in the common missions of their countries. Both leaders thought that if an alliance with the Balkan countries was formed, the pressure from the West can be effectively prevented. On the other hand, they exerted intensive efforts to establish a partnership between Greece and Turkey in particular. For this purpose, the Balkan Conferences, which took place with the participation of representatives of the Balkan states between 1930-1934, aimed at establishing a Balkan Union-Alliance in the peninsula (Lopandic & Kronja, 2011, p. 37). Another biggest step of this was the gathering of the First Balkan Conference in Athens in October 1930. Remarkable decisions were made in the Second Balkan Conference, which was held in Istanbul and Ankara, that Ataturk hosted in 1931. In addition to establishments such as the Inter-Balkan Trade and Industrial Chamber, Inter-Balkan Postal and Tourist Union, it was also decided to establish institutions for scientific field work such as the Balkan Institute for historical research. According to the findings of Lopandic & Kronja (2011), one of the most remarkable decisions made at this time was surely about the visa issue. All peoples living in the Balkans were granted free travel in the peninsula without a visa in order to ensure that the Balkan states would be acquainted with each other and become closer (p. 39). Subsequently, as following Map 4.3 shows that, the Balkan Entente was signed between Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Romania in February 1934.

**Map 4.3:** Map of Balkan Entente countries





All states that signed the agreement mutually confirmed the protection of the borders of the Balkans (Barlas & Vlastic, 2016, p. 111). Although the possibility of establishing new structural organizations among the Balkan states emerged, problems arising from past between countries prevented a clear cooperation. For example; Albania was claiming rights on the southern Epirus region, where the Albanian population lived and was part of Greece, and Kosovo, within the borders of Yugoslavia. Bulgaria, on the other hand, did not agree to lose Western Thrace, which joined Greece, and the territory of Dobrudja, which Romania gained, and in addition it also claimed right on Fyr. Macedonia. Romania was preparing a defense for the possibility of an offensive attack against Bessarabia and Dobrudja. Yugoslavia, due to its multi-ethnic structure resulting from its significant Albanian and Hungarian population was suffering from internal problems and hesitating from the intervention of its neighbors. Greece's problems were not solely with Albania on the northern Epirus issue; it was also in conflict with Yugoslavia on the use of the port of Thessaloniki, which was important from the geopolitical point of view (Jelavich, 1983, p. 212).

Looking from another point of view, the weak point of the Entente was that no one of the member states was clear about defending each other if there was intervention by European foreign powers (Jelavich, 1983, pp. 212-213). For instance, Turkey avoided being a side at a war that could take place between Romania and Russia. Likewise, Greece displayed an attitude showing that it preferred not to be involved in Yugoslavia's ongoing problem with Italy (Jelavich, 1983, p. 213). In addition, if member states are exposed to external threats, members were obliged to help. If Italy occupied Yugoslavia, Greece did not want its country to be confronted with Italy. (Fotakis, 2011, p. 56; Barlas, 2005, p. 448; Mango, 2002, p. 487). Finally, in spite of everything, Turkey and Greece responded to this by establishing an Entente in the Balkans.

It can be said that the Balkan Entente enabled the Balkan countries to cooperate and act together on the peninsula against the struggles of the great powers over the region. It was because these countries were not able to act alone economically and politically. Also, the emergence of this situation in the Balkans gave Turkey the opportunity to follow a Balkan policy independent from the great powers (Barlas, 2005, p. 449). The Balkans are the first region where Turkish diplomacy endeavored to take the initiative. As Barlas explains (2005); Turkey as a Balkan state focused on this region to provide stability and implement its own policy in the peninsula, where deep national interests existed (p. 463).

Undoubtedly, Turkey preferred to apply this policy along with Greece, where it is bordered by both land and sea in the West and with which its basic problems were resolved mainly after the Lausanne.

As a result, the agreement signed in 1934 was not only a beginning of a new era for the Balkans, but also for Greek-Turkish relations (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2010, p. 102). The Pact contributed greatly to the strengthening of Greek-Turkish relations.

### **4.3 The Idea of Confederation and Unity in the Balkans**

As a new and young nation state, Turkey provided political stability within the country, but it had to be strong and stable in economic terms to mitigate the 1929 crisis as other Balkan states faced.

Turkey, together with Greece which shared the same views, became the leading country in the realization of the Balkan Conferences that would cover all the countries of the peninsula. It would not be an explanatory statement to consider the Greek-Turkish rapprochement only in the narrow frame as a joint effort for the construction of Balkan Conferences. The Greek-Turkish reconciliation also brought up the topic of establishing a Greek-Turkish union in the Balkans. Papanastassiou, a Greek political leader, even proposed Istanbul to become the capital for the possible foundation of Balkan Union (Barlas, 2005, p. 449).

Supported by Venizelos and Atatürk between 1928 and 1933, *hellenoturkism* was designed on an egalitarian basis and without an anti-Slavic principle for the first time (Kitsikis, 1995, p. 17). Kitsikis (1995) interpreted the impacts of the two countries on each other as a unified single country as,

*"The two states were equally robust. For the Turks, the decline in the East had stopped, whereas the Greek rise in the West had also ceased (...) Due to the organization of these two nationstates, after 1923 there had been a balance of force between the two shores of the Aegean (...) in 1928 [Greece] had a territory of 129.281 km<sup>2</sup> and 6.204.864 inhabitants (...) [while] Turkey 13.711.000 inhabitants and a territory of 772.340 km<sup>2</sup> (...) If in terms of population and territorial extent Turkey excelled of Greece, the balance between the two countries was restored by the superiority of Greece's in economic, cultural and social and national homogeneity terms"* (Kitsikis, pp. 17-19; Kypraios, 2015, p. 61).

According to the findings of Kypraios (2015), Ataturk also supported a federation to be established with Greece. After the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Arbitration and Conciliation in 1930, Ataturk's following statement ‘*from now on, Greece's borders should be admitted as Turkey's*’ gave the hints of the steps that would be taken in the future by Venizelos and Ataturk (p. 58). During his election campaign in 1933, Venizelos made the following declaration about the future of Greece and Turkey:

*"Maybe someday we will constitute one state together. As Aras told me, the only thing that divides us is Maritza river. Maybe one day it will divide us just in terms of administration"* (Kypraios, 2015, p. 57).

In conclusion, ‘*Hellenoturkism*’ (Kitsikis, 1998, p. 62) idea which was put forward by Dimitris Kitsikis in 1966, ironically lived its brightest time in the period of Venizelos-Ataturk that covered the years 1928-32, in which the trauma caused by the Turkish-Greek conflict in Anatolia was not overcome yet. This sincere rapprochement initiated by the two leaders reached its peak with the idea of establishing the ‘*Greek-Turkish Confederation*’ (Kypraios, 2015, pp. 54-55).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study dealt with Greek-Turkish rapprochement on the basis of Venizelos and Ataturk and the implications of Balkan Geopolitics. In general, we tried to put on the table that what are the effects of these two statesmen on the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. The first part was about introduction. In the second chapter we discussed Venizelos and Ataturk's role in historical background and the influence of their countries on politics. In the third part, which is the main part of this study, it is tried to examine how the Greek-Turkish rapprochement developed. In doing so, this section was divided into two: Period of Tension and Rapprochement. The fourth chapter was about the influence of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement initiated by the two leaders on Balkan geopolitics.

Throughout history, the two countries, which are generally regarded as competitors, have come together in the common interests and have begun the process of rapprochement, forming the most important cornerstone of relations between the two sides. In a general sense, within the main lines it has studied how these two countries, defined as competitors, achieved a period of rapprochement in the sense that they would become an example to the World. This is the result of the pragmatist policies that the two leaders have followed. Therefore, it is necessary to mention some findings here.

Venizelos and Ataturk are the leaders of modern Greece and Turkey in general terms. As emphasized in the second part, Venizelos emerges as the most important actor in the formation of modern Greece. Especially played a key role in the foreign relations of his country. According to the emerging world conjuncture, he tried to put a new politics into action. He tried to maintain the lands he gained to Greece in Anatolia. Venizelos, who faced the resistance under the leadership of Ataturk and could not succeed in the face of this power, then defined his main policy as protection of the lands of Greece. On the other hand, Ataturk, as everyone thinks, did not choose not to interfere with the establishment of a new country after the war. At the same time he did not modernize the new country he had set up, but he also made a great effort to establish a cooperative and peaceful atmosphere for his country to forget the old hostilities with its neighbours. It began to take place with the thought of providing the atmosphere of reconciliation and peace that the two leaders had.

As explained in the third section, it is necessary to emphasize the reasons of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement initiated under the leadership of Venizelos and Ataturk in the light of this study. Venizelos and Ataturk thought that even though they had recently fought each other, Greece and Turkey had to enter into a period of rapprochement and friendship. Especially due to the changing geopolitical balances, both countries needed one another. But before this happened, there were obstacles such as a) Patriarchate, b) Exchange Population.

The two leaders were willing to resolve these issues, providing an atmosphere that would allow for the establishment of rapprochement. It is important to note here that this is a remarkable development of mutual gestures made by Venizelos and Ataturk in the process of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey. It is useful to mention here some of the cornerstone developments, such as;

- The first time a Turkish ambassador participates in ceremonies of Greek independence celebrations,
- The first time a Greek Prime Minister visits Ankara,
- In addition, for the first time a Greek prime minister visits Istanbul and the Patriarchate,
- Ismet Inonu's visit to Athens,
- The Turkish embassy in Tehran protects the Greek interests in Iran,
- Venizelos nominates Ataturk for the Nobel Peace Prize,
- Establishment of the Balkan Pact on the initiative of the two leaders,
- When Venizelos visited Ankara, he thought of establishing a single state with Turkey in the future.

When all these developments are taken into consideration, it is no doubt that this period of rapprochement realized by the two leaders has made the relations between the two countries the most important period. The rapprochement achieved by Venizelos and Ataturk provided not only the development of relations between the two countries, but also the establishment of regional peace. This is a rare period of development and rapprochement in the history of the world as Venizelos and Ataturk considered signing a friendship agreement in 1930 in Ankara, a struggle from the Sevres Accord.

Two great politicians went into a hot conflict such as war first. However, the two leaders, realizing how important peace was for the future, proved themselves to be mature and forward-looking statesmen to give a helping hand to the country, which once they had fought.

If the findings of the fourth part from the geopolitical direction are to be indicated, the Balkan pact, which was established under the leadership of Greece and Turkey, gave the right to determine the future of the region for the first time to the Balkan countries. Greek-Turkish rapprochement contributed positively to the establishment of this pact, but some negative geopolitical problems also contributed. The dangers of Italy and Bulgaria were major factor.

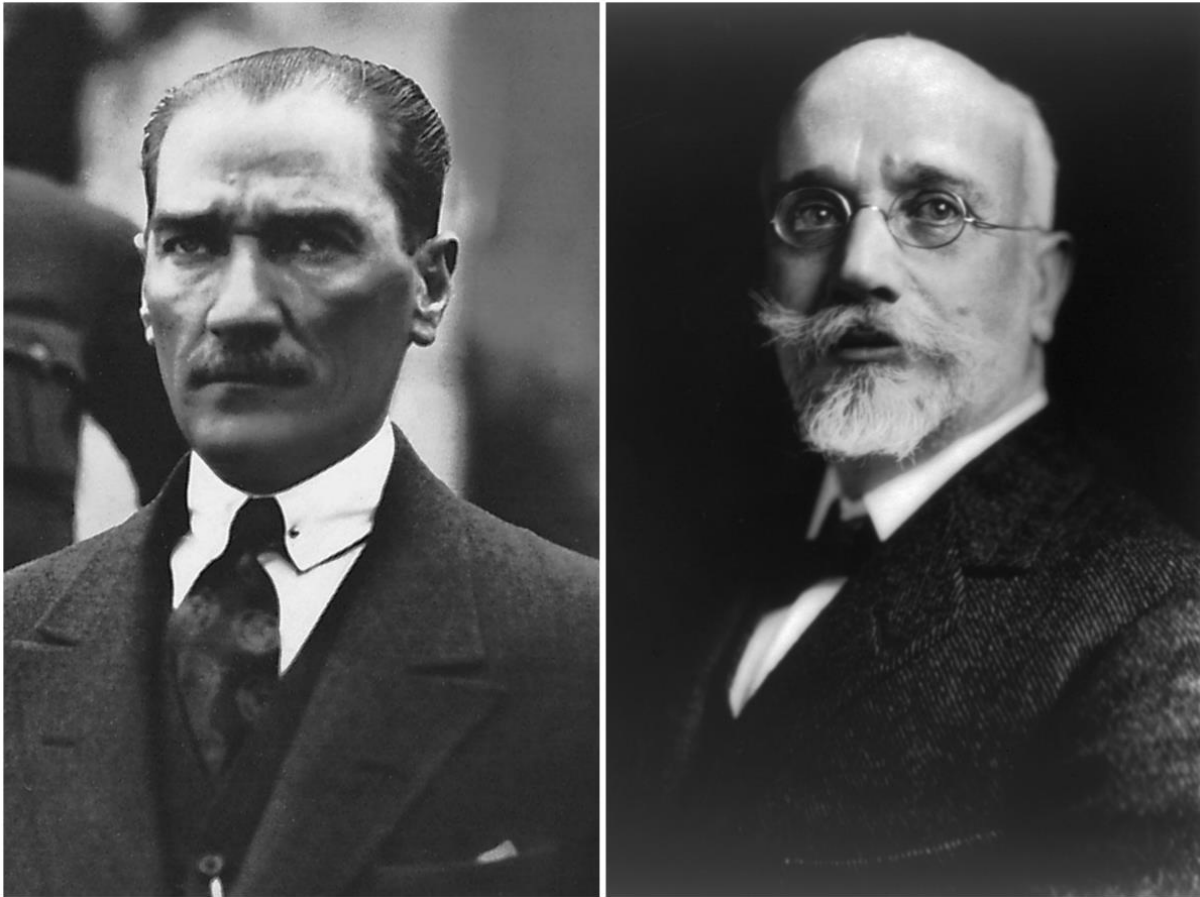
This pact was both weak and powerful. It was strong because it provided economic, cultural and social development in the region. It was weak because, in the event of an attack, the countries were not willing enough to help each other.

Another point to remember here is that Kant expressed that the idea of Perpetual Peace could be established only by the states that equally cooperate and implement peaceful policies. The politics that Greece and Turkey followed in particular between 1928-1934 are seen to be in the same direction with this opinion. Situations such as; the visit of Venizelos to Turkey and participation in the Republic Ball, his nomination of Ataturk to the Nobel; Inonu's visit to Athens, Turkey's diplomatic protection of Greek interests in Iran; Venizelos' coming back to Turkey, meeting with Ataturk in Istanbul and their laying the foundation of the Balkan pact, the idea of federation between two countries.

These are evidence of the efforts of Venizelos and Ataturk to establish lasting peace between Greece and Turkey. It reveals the fact that these policies followed by the two leaders are in the same direction as the theory used in the study.

To sum up, it is the importance of leadership quality in country relations and politics. The greatest examples of this are Venizelos and Ataturk. Thanks to the politics that the two statesmen pursued on the basis of their leadership, the peoples of the two countries have reached today's levels of education and culture, social and economic. For this reason, the people of these two countries who take this period of rapprochement, which was opened by their leaders, as an example will always defend peace and friendship in the future.

**Figure 4.1:** The Portrait of Mustafa K. Ataturk and Eleftherios K. Venizelos



Source: <http://gazetemanifesto.com>

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