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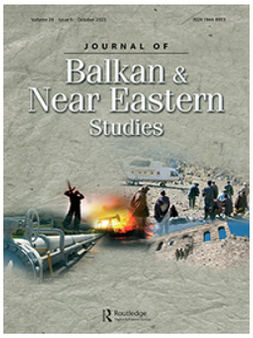

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Petitions, Propaganda, and Plots: Transnational Dynamics of Diplomacy During the Turkish War of Independence

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ABSTRACT

The international recognition of Turkey through the Treaty of Lausanne is often seen as the foundational moment of Turkey in international diplomacy. This article approaches diplomatic history from a decentred perspective. It highlights the activities of various non-state actors and semi-official figures who became engaged in international politics during the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923). They used citizen diplomacy, public propaganda, as well as other clandestine and public channels of transnational diplomacy to strive against the Allied peace terms. Notwithstanding their divergent political visions and agendas, these unofficial diplomats strengthened—though not always intentionally—the international recognition of the Turkish nation-state formation, only to be absorbed by the Ankara government's growing monopoly on foreign policy. Informed by the New Diplomatic History approach, this article illustrates the important role of unofficial, transnational dynamics that escapes state-centred accounts of Ottoman-Turkish diplomacy during the aftermath of the First World War.

Introduction

Historians have pointed out that the formation of modern nation states in the Middle East was a result of a complex process of diplomatic negotiations and resistance struggles during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War.[1] The Paris Peace Conference and its follow-up meetings in London and San Remo in 1919–1920 caused a wave of protest by Ottoman Turks and Muslims. With the Allies scheming the partition of the Ottoman Empire, the Greek army invading Izmir in May 1919, and the Sultan's government remaining submissive before those incursions, came the hour of non-state activists struggling to safeguard Turkey's sovereignty. Like the other Central Powers, the Ottoman government in Istanbul was excluded from the negotiations in Paris. A delegation under Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Pasha had briefly visited the Peace Conference in June 1919 and made the claim for a restoration of the empire's borders. But they were met with a sharp rebuff.[2] In the disputed heartlands of the Ottoman state, which was commonly referred to as Turkey by contemporaries,[3] the Istanbul government lost support, as the National Forces (*kuvâ-yı milliye*) around Mustafa Kemal rose to

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power and established a counter-government in Ankara in April 1920. The eventful period from the fall of the wartime regime under the 'Young Turk' Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, in short CUP or Unionists) with the armistice of 30 October 1918 to the foundation of Kemalist republic on 29 October 1923, was marked by an ambiguity of authority in Turkey's diplomacy. First the state monopoly on Turkey's diplomatic representation became eroded. Then diplomacy unfolded in a decentral manner before it was again centralized and monopolized under the authority of Ankara.

This ambiguity not only challenged the diplomatic conventions of its time but also confuses classic categories of diplomatic history: Who was a diplomat and who spoke for Turkey? A broad array of Ottoman-Turkish-Muslim actors and organizations intervened on behalf of Turkey during this transitional phase. The result was a pluralization of diplomacy. Besides the government of the Ottoman Sultan in Allied-occupied Istanbul, the new Ankara government—itself not yet an internationally recognized state—emerged with the claim to represent Turkey. Moreover, a variety of other non-state or semi-official actors, including the former CUP leaders and Ottoman liberals in European exile, engaged in international politics. Through civic petitions and public propaganda, various actors such as the members of the Geneva-based Ottoman League and the Turkish Clubs, became 'citizen diplomats'. In what we call transnational conference diplomacy, many semi-official or unofficial delegates have also participated in congresses to represent Turkey and to protest and pressure diplomatic developments. They became citizen diplomats precisely because their existence as citizens was at stake, threatened by the partition of the Ottoman Empire and the curtailment of its sovereignty. Their unofficial yet occasional state-endorsed interventions supported the cause of Turkey's national sovereignty.[4] Besides, there were less public and more subversive attempts, especially by former CUP members and the counter-government in Ankara, to influence international politics through a more or less clandestine struggle in transnational revolutionary diplomacy to overturn the conditions of the peace settlement. Those dispersed but often also interconnected efforts to fill the diplomatic void aimed at shaping the political future of Turkey. They can be regarded as transnational dynamics of Turkish foreign policy and diplomacy during the National Struggle (*millî mücadele*) and the War of Independence (*İstiklâl Harbi*) led by the Ankara government and the National Forces.

The international recognition of Turkey after the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923 is often seen as the foundational moment of the Republic of Turkey's diplomatic history.[5] Seminal studies highlight the interstate negotiations at the conferences in Paris, London, and finally Lausanne as well as the opposing diplomatic strategies pursued by the Sultan's government in Istanbul and the national-revolutionary government in Ankara, respectively.[6] In this article, we approach the topic from a decentred perspective. Instead of following the state-centred narrative of a linear development from the submissive diplomacy of a defeated empire to the sovereign foreign policy of the new republic, we paint a diversified picture. Based on a variety of archival and published sources we illuminate various actors beyond the foreign ministries and highlight their unconventional interventions into international politics. By focusing on those 'unofficial diplomats',[7] our article links the history of the formation of the Republic of Turkey with the field of New Diplomatic History, hence widening the notion of who belongs to the realm of diplomacy.[8]

The kind of unofficial diplomats hogging the limelight of this article all propagated, petitioned, and plotted in opposition to the peace settlement of the Treaty of Sèvres that was signed by a delegation of the Sultan's government on 10 August 1920 and stipulated the partition of Turkey. As the article argues, these transnational dynamics, regardless of their internal differences and diverging visions of political order, accompanied the emergence of the Kemalist republic in the international system. Unofficial, transnational diplomacy, as the case of Turkey shows, strengthened the emerging nation-state, only to be absorbed by its emergent monopoly over legitimate means of diplomacy. The article is thus in line with the field of New Diplomatic History, stressing that the role of non-state actors in diplomacy is important. However, it also echoes the criticism recently raised within the field, arguing that historians should not turn their back on the power of nation-states.[9] In the case of our article, it is exactly the relationship and tension between non-official efforts and state diplomacy that helps us get a deeper understanding of the postwar diplomatic history. This is particularly true for the transition years from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey when state power was ambiguous and divided between the established Ottoman government in Istanbul and the Ankara government that became more and more institutionalized and powerful, hence gaining diplomatic recognition. However, beyond Istanbul and Ankara, there were various transnational dynamics and a variety of non-state actors that contributed to the international recognition of Turkey.

Citizen diplomacy, public propaganda, and the emergence of a unified national discourse

Eager to influence the negotiations at Paris in 1919, activists and journalists from all over the world plunged into political activism.[10] Ottoman Muslim activists spread publications in English, French and German addressing the postwar developments under evocative but conflicting titles such as 'For the Defence of the Legitimate Rights of the Turkish Nationality' or 'Turkey before the World Tribunal'.[11] Among them were members of the *Türk Yurdu*, nationalist Turkish Clubs located in several European cities; their liberal counterpart, the *Ligue Ottomane* (Ottoman League) in Geneva; and the National Congress, a cross-party umbrella network operating in Allied-occupied Istanbul. In addition to publications, various activists wrote open letters and petitions to US President Woodrow Wilson, the peace convent, or the League of Nations. Some individuals stood out for their commitment and transnational mobility as citizen diplomats. One of them was Halil Halid, a former diplomat, who had participated in the pan-Islamic, anti-British activities of the Ottoman-German secret services during the war.[12] In February 1919, he was in Switzerland where he published anti-colonial and pan-Islamic polemics against British imperialism.[13] Another person that comes to mind is Ahmed Rıza, the former president of the Ottoman senate. He travelled to Paris on behalf of the National Struggle, giving talks and writing about the moral failure of the Great Powers.[14] What united all activists and groups, aside from the cause of national sovereignty, was the attempt to change public discourse and diplomatic decisions in the West through public propaganda and citizen diplomacy.

Although most citizen diplomats were men, women did play a role as well. The best-known example is the writer and educator Halide Edib (Adıvar). In 1918, she became

a member of the Turkish Wilsonian League, an association of Istanbul intellectuals and editors who, in a move to protect Turkey from European imperialist designs, sent a letter to President Wilson asking the US for protection and future guidance in state-building.[15] When members of the Ottoman League sent protest telegrams to the German government for giving asylum to the fugitive Unionist leaders of the wartime Ottoman government, also a group of women in Geneva under the leadership of Fatma Halil protested Germany.[16] Another example is above mentioned Ahmed Rıza's sister Selma Rıza (Feraceli), who was a journalist and member of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. She joined the Turkish League of Nations Society, an association founded in 1921 to lobby European internationalist circles on behalf of Turkish-national interests.[17] Halide Edib and Selma Rıza were also members of the Ottoman Red Crescent which was politically oriented towards the national resistance.[18] Other women associated with the Ottoman Red Crescent Society travelled from Istanbul to Switzerland with funds to support the Turkish diaspora community but were falsely suspected of espionage and subversion.[19] Names of women also appeared on petitions. Over one hundred parties and individuals—among them forty-three women—had signed a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the League of Nations in July 1919, protesting their country's dismemberment and demanding that it should be recognized and admitted to the League. Their names appeared at the bottom of the signature list and belonged mostly to relatives of prominent male politicians and public figures, such as Atia and Azize, the daughter and widow of the former Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha, as well as Fatima, the wife of the editor of the newspaper *İstiklâl*. Only one signatory, Hajira, identified not qua her relationship with a male family member but as a writer.[20] For educated Muslim women, who had remained largely excluded from Ottoman politics, the engagement in citizen diplomacy was not only tied to the struggle for national independence but also—implicitly—to the struggle for a more active form of citizenship.[21]

In general, when saying that postwar Ottoman-Turkish-Muslim activists became citizen diplomats, one should note that their status as citizens was not a given. They became politically involved because they saw their citizenship and sovereign existence threatened by the post-war settlement. What is more, their ideas about the future of Turkey and citizenship varied, ranging from a type of multinational federalism to a more exclusive Turkish-Muslim nationalism. Even if rarely explicitly discussed by the authors themselves, this variety implied different conceptions of identity and sovereignty. These differences shaped the post-war political landscape in the Ottoman lands. And, beyond, they shaped the Ottoman-Turkish diaspora, especially in neutral Switzerland where both the nationalist Turkish Club and the liberal Ottoman League engaged in forms of unofficial diplomacy.[22]

Since 1917, anti-Unionist liberals used the Ottoman League in Geneva for oppositional activities, for instance in trying to establish relations with the Allies and undermine the German-Turkish war alliance. The Turkish Clubs in Geneva and Lausanne, on the contrary, maintained close ties to the CUP regime.[23] Two days before the opening of the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919, the Ottoman League organized a meeting in Geneva. Among the participants were the founder of the Ottoman Liberal Party Prince Mehmed Sabahaddin, former Minister of Interior Ahmet Reşit (Rey), and the ex-diplomat Kurdish Mehmet Şerif Pasha. They drafted resolutions invoking Wilson's Fourteen Points and sent them to the Allies.[24] Two months later, Ahmet Reşit published

an open letter to Wilson in which he protested the plans to internationalize Istanbul and turn parts of Anatolia into League of Nations mandates. He did not, however, insist on the full territorial integrity of the empire. Speaking on behalf of the liberal Turks, he welcomed the idea of national self-determination and 'the liberation of the different peoples of the Ottoman Empire'.[25] This view differed from the position of the official Ottoman delegation which visited the Peace Conference in June 1919, asking for a restoration of the empire because of Ottomanist 'feelings which are deeper than the principle of nationality'.[26] Ahmet Reşit, who also participated in that delegation, was unable to persuade the Ottoman government to adopt the nationality principle in lieu of old imperial visions.[27] This shows the inner diversity and nuances of postwar visions of nation and statehood among Ottoman Turks. It also highlights the blurred line between official and unofficial diplomacy, with Ahmet Reşit acting as a non-state petitioner, allowing him to articulate his own political visions more freely, and some months later as a state envoy.

Others in the Ottoman League shared Ahmet Reşit's federalist vision. Mehmet Şerif Pasha visited the Peace Conference as the spokesman of the liberals, thus engaging in a more direct form of diplomacy. Addressing the Allied leaders, he announced that the 'Ottoman Liberal Party, the sincere partisan of modern ideas cannot hesitate in loyally adding to its programme the principle of nationality'.[28] Şerif Pasha, who is better known for his consequent attempt to represent the Kurdish delegation at the Peace Conference, saw no conflict in defending both, the independence of Ottoman Turkey and the establishment of a Kurdish state. There was indeed no ideological contradiction because Şerif Pasha asked that the nationality principle 'be applied universally' based on ethnic population ratios. To realize this vision, he built unlikely alliances. He approached the Armenian, Arab and Indian representatives in Paris also pitching his vision of an Ottoman confederation including Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and Armenians to Talat Pasha, one of the leaders of the wartime CUP regime responsible for the genocide of Armenians, who was spending a short time in Switzerland in the winter of 1919/1920.[29] In fact, Unionists like Talat, but also Mustafa Kemal, upheld the idea of an Ottoman-Muslim federal union in their struggle against European powers.[30]

Ahmet Reşit and Şerif Pasha were supporters of Ottomanism who, facing postwar realities, turned to federalist ideas and picked up the political language of Wilsonianism.[31] This distinguished them from more nationalist groups like the Turkish Clubs who also referred to Wilsonianism though calling in a more exclusive sense for Muslim or even Turkish self-determination.[32] Western observers sometimes failed to understand the internal diversity and the complex alliances of post-war Ottoman-Muslim activists. In June 1919, British intelligence reports warned against the Genevan Ottoman League which they thought was 'run by the Turkish leaders in Germany with German help'[33] and with the goal to send 'appeals to the fanaticism of Moslems and Hindus: the fomentation of revolution and revolts in Egypt and Anatolia, or wherever else possible'.[34] The Ottoman League, like other groups, evoked the Caliphate as a symbol of Muslim unity and an argument against Western partition and the separation of Istanbul. Yet it had little to do with organizing a global pan-Islamic revolt. Its founding members continued to criticize the CUP after the armistice. They did not simply side with either the former CUP regime, or the Sultan's government, or the emerging counter-government in Ankara. One British agent also falsely claimed that

Halil Halid, who was known as a notorious anti-British activist, was a middleman between the former CUP leaders and the Ottoman League. Similarly, the French Embassy in Berne put pressure on the Ottoman League, alleging that its member Shakib Arslan, who was disliked due to his anti-French position regarding Syria and Lebanon, was an agent to the former CUP leaders. To be sure, Shakib Arslan certainly belonged to Talat and Enver's faction, but he had no noteworthy contact to them in this period. He voluntarily stepped down from the League's board after the attack.[35] In the case of Halil Halid, too, British intelligence overestimated his ties to the former regime leaders. German intelligence reports indicate that Halil Halid considered the fugitive CUP leaders as traitors.[36] He was also dismissive, if not ignorant, about the pan-Islamist activities of Dagestanis, Persians, and Egyptians in European exile. Also, he remained pessimistic about the resistance movement in Anatolia, thinking it was probably nothing more than Muslim banditry in Greek and Armenian populated areas.[37]

Besides ideological differences, what separated the more liberal Young Turks from the more nationalist factions in the months following the armistice was the liberals' more optimistic hope to find a fair diplomatic solution with the Allies. They felt more connected to the Istanbul government which, under Sultan Vahdettin and his brother-in-law Grand Vizier Ferid Pasha, also sought a rapprochement with the Entente governments.[38] Unionists and National Forces, on the other hand, seemed to have been more quickly disillusioned with Wilsonianism or remained cynical about the promises of European diplomacy. Since mid-1919, however, disillusionment spread beyond party lines. The Greek occupation and Allied plans—including the planned foundation of a 'Wilsonian Armenia', possible Allied mandates in Anatolia, and the discussed internationalization of Istanbul—made the future of Turkey seem ever gloomier. At that time, the Ottoman League became more mixed and open to Unionists and the National Struggle. Different political currents canalized into a more unified movement. Some members of the Ottoman League also felt at enmity not only towards the invading Greek troops but also towards Ottoman Christian minorities who seemed to support the partition of their homeland. Ahmet Reşit saw Turkey threatened by 'Armenian intrigues and Greek machinations'.[39] Unlike many Unionists and other nationalists, and this is a key difference, Ahmet Reşit and Şerif Paşa did not completely deny the wartime crimes against Armenians. Like the Istanbul government, though, they put all the blame on the CUP regime.[40] While they did not share the same strong sentiments against non-Muslim minorities displayed in some publications of the Turkish Clubs,[41] they did agree with the idea of a self-defensive Ottoman-Muslim unity and perseverance of a Turkish entity in Anatolia, Istanbul, and Thrace. Already by October 1918, the Turkish Clubs had referred to Wilson's promise that the 'Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty',[42] insisting that at least all of Anatolia between the Caucasus in the East, Thrace in the West, the Black Sea in the North and the Mediterranean in the South was 'the essential and original heritage of our nation' and an 'undeniably Turkish country'.[43] Facing the threat of partition, the liberals took a similar line, with Şerif Pasha in Paris citing ethnic population statistics in order to prove the right of the Turks to a state in Asia Minor, where 'the Turkish people shows an incontestable majority'.[44] On the same ground, he argued against the planned internationalization of Istanbul that to him as well as to Ahmet Reşit constituted 'a Turkish city out and out'.[45] Taken together, the case of the diaspora in Geneva underlines the plurality of political visions on the side

of Ottoman-Turkish actors in the novel context of postwar international politics. Raising their voices amidst the Peace Conference, they became citizen diplomats who all defended Turkey—or rather: different visions of what Turkey was and should become. Cacophony turned into polyphony, however, as diverse voices converged towards a minimal consensus in terms of national identity and sovereignty. The initial plurality of non-official diplomacy in Turkey and the European diaspora was later absorbed by the broad support for the National Pact (*Mîsâk-ı Millî*) drafted by Mustafa Kemal and the National Forces in September 1919 and adopted by the Ottoman Parliament in Istanbul in January 1920.[46]

Transnational revolutionary diplomacy as a leverage on the peace settlement

While citizen diplomacy rests on the idea of individuals representing a country through open engagement and public outreach, diplomacy in times of war often becomes entrenched in matters of secrecy and security.[47] Since the beginning of intercommunal violence in the contested territories of Anatolia, the National Forces, later under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, were subjected to an international discourse of criminalization as bandits, rebels, and local warlords, to which the Sultan's government in Istanbul was actively contributing. This was certainly not untrue in the initial phase of the resistance, where violence and chaos plagued the contested provinces, but it overlooks the remarkable development of a broad movement of citizen engagement and popular protest in Turkey and beyond. Despite the establishment of a parliamentary body in form of the Grand National Assembly in April 1920 and the effective transition from guerrilla bands to a more conventional warfare, the diplomatic struggle for international recognition remained subjected to double standards of the lingering global imperial order of the 19th century.[48] Until the final signing of the new peace treaty in 1923, the Ankara government was regarded as a pariah state. The Allies' coercive diplomacy towards this pariah statehood of the Ankara government resembled criminal investigations and negotiations with terrorist groups. On the part of the British government, colonial anxieties gave way to paranoid perceptions about the preciousness of victory, initiating thus the pre-emptive policing of 'anarchical and revolutionary crimes' in the Empire's colonial possessions.[49] With revolts, revolutions, and wars of independence taking place from Ireland to Mesopotamia, from Egypt to Afghanistan, the National Struggle in Turkey occupied a central place in the imaginaries of British officials who faced what historians call the 'crisis of empire'.[50] British and French diplomatic officials believed that pan-Islamism and Bolshevism had joined forces against imperialism in the East. In this alleged global plot, so-called 'Young Turk intrigues'[51] were seen as the principal force of subversion in the Muslim world at the behest of German revisionists, Russian Bolsheviks, or other cabals.[52] In the chaos and uncertainty even rumours of supposed clandestine plots—whether real or not—affected international relations.[53]

To be sure, Turkish actors utilized secret and revolutionary diplomacy to create leverage against the Allies. The Turkish War of Independence was in fact initiated through Young Turk intrigues.[54] Before the CUP leaders resigned and fled the country in November 1918, they gave orders to their followers in the clandestine services of the Ottoman military and the CUP's underground networks to continue the armed struggle against the Allies.[55] One of the organizations founded for this purpose was the Karakol

Society. It organized the secret deployment of arms, supplies, and manpower to Anatolia.[56] The Karakol's relation to Mustafa Kemal remained ambiguous. As the latter rose to the top of the resistance movement, he became vigilant about the autonomy of Unionist networks.[57] The equation of the National Forces with Unionists in the public discourse was a problem for Mustafa Kemal. An insider report from Istanbul warned: 'The issue, which the oppositionals here most strongly advocate is convincing everybody that the nationalist movement is a Unionist movement and that Talat and Enver will soon come into power'. Mustafa Kemal replied personally: 'In any given occasion, we did not restrain to deny that we have nothing to do with Unionism'.[58] While Mustafa Kemal was relying on the network and personnel of the Unionists, he demanded exclusive subordination under the Committee of Representatives over which he presided. Yet, the Karakol Society undertook autonomous diplomatic efforts in the name of the Anatolian resistance movement. In late 1919, a secret Karakol delegation went to Baku to initiate a Turkish-Russian agreement. This plan did not really contradict Mustafa Kemal's own diplomacy, as he had himself dispatched some leading Unionists to go to Baku to make agreements with Azerbaijani nationalists and Russian Bolsheviks against the Armenian Republic.[59] Karakol's initiative, however, had been unauthorized and out of his control. The Karakol delegate claiming to represent the 'provisional revolutionary government in Turkey' signed a Turco-Russian agreement with the Russian Bolshevik representative in Baku on 11 January 1920.[60] Mustafa Kemal considered this treaty a breach of authority and refused to ratify it.[61] False rumours circulated by the British intelligence services claiming that Enver was in Azerbaijan at the head of a Muslim-Bolshevik army were raising the stakes for all parties involved.[62] In the face of similar false rumours that Enver was leading an army in the Caucasus, Turkish military officials urged to react 'cautiously and discreetly'.[63] The spectre of former Unionists in international politics was both a blessing and curse to Mustafa Kemal and the National Struggle.

Independent from the activities of the Karakol Society, the fugitive Unionist leaders in Europe were involved in similar plans. Talat and Enver had secretly met with Bolshevik leader Karl Radek in Berlin and agreed upon a Turco-Russian plan for a Muslim struggle against the European empires.[64] Upon this preliminary agreement, Enver tried to travel to Moscow.[65] Meanwhile, both Enver and Talat were also secretly negotiating with a British military official in Berlin. In hopes of persuading Britain to withdraw from Turkey, Enver indicated that only the CUP could establish 'an independent Turkey closely and secretly associated with Great Britain'.[66] Playing on the British fears, Enver claimed that the peace of the whole Muslim world depended on a peace settlement with Turkey. Yet, these talks with the British went nowhere. Hence, the Unionist leaders concentrated their efforts on reaching an agreement with the Soviets. In an attempt to break up the Entente, Talat also secretly negotiated with French officials in Switzerland in the autumn of 1919, though without any success. Yet, he claimed to have very good relations with the Italians.[67] Rome would soon become the new centre of Turkish nationalists, where Unionists and Kemalists were in close touch with Italian officials.[68] Opposing British and Greek plans of partition in Anatolia, France and Italy were increasingly sympathetic towards the Turkish nationalists to safeguard their own interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Rumours and intelligence reports on a potential plot between Arab and Turkish insurgents in the French-occupied territories of Cilicia, Alexandretta, and Aleppo had become a major concern for French officials, who were

eager to maintain their control over Syria.[69] Indirectly, those alleged Unionist and Bolshevik plots in the Turco-Arab borderlands contributed to strengthening of the diplomatic position of the Ankara government, because the French declared a cease-fire with Turkish nationalists in South Anatolia to undercut the supposed plots and safeguard the French colonial interests in the establishment of a League of Nations mandate over Syria.[70] This Franco-Turkish rapprochement would result in the Ankara Agreement of 20 October 1921.

When the Unionist leaders arrived in Soviet Russia in the summer of 1920, they engaged in diplomatic relations on behalf of the Ankara government. This was based on a mutual understanding between Mustafa Kemal and Talat in early 1920 under the condition that they respected Mustafa Kemal as the single authority of decision-making.[71] Enver's uncle Halil was even assigned directly by Mustafa Kemal to approach the Soviet government, resulting in a deal for the first delivery of arms and gold to the National Forces.[72] Yet, Mustafa Kemal was again concerned about the autonomous agency of Unionists and declared that the Unionist leaders abroad had no mandate to engage in diplomatic affairs in the name of the Ankara government.[73] Nevertheless, once Enver arrived in Moscow, he got involved in the Kemalist-Soviet negotiations as an informal mediator. As the Soviet Russian Foreign Commissar Georgy Chicherin acknowledged, Enver played an important role in the signing of the Soviet-Turkish treaty of 16 March 1921.[74] Meanwhile, Cemal Pasha went from Moscow to Kabul where he lobbied for the Soviet-Afghan and Turco-Afghan treaties of friendship signed in February and March 1921.[75] Hence, the initial international recognition of the Ankara government took place not through the channels of imperial diplomacy in Europe but through the alternative channels of revolutionary diplomacy in Eurasia, in which the transgressions of informal agents, like Enver and Cemal, played a key role as unofficial mediators and lobbyists. In doing so, the Unionist leaders were not only motivated by selfless patriotism but ambitiously envisioned themselves commanding a united front of Muslim countries—Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan—that were allied with Soviet Russia in a revolutionary-military offensive against the British in the Middle East and South Asia. What Enver and Cemal could not foresee was that these agreements rather forced the British to come to a settlement with the Ankara government. The ongoing Soviet-Kemalist talks had forced the British to invite a Kemalist delegation to the London Conference of 1921, where former Unionist minister of finance and Talat Pasha's confidant Cavid accompanied the Ankara delegation to London to lobby for a favourable rapprochement with Italy and France.[76]

At about the same time, British officials started to distinguish between the different Young Turk factions. While the Kemalists were regarded as 'genuine' nationalists, Unionists were seen as agitators for pan-Islamism and Bolshevism.[77] To put pressure on the Ankara government, the Allies and the Sultan's government spread rumours that Enver would march into Anatolia at the head of a Red Army cavalry brigade.[78] While meant to delegitimize the National Forces—via association with Enver—as the harbingers of Bolshevik atheism and anarchism, those rumours ironically created a stark contrast between Enver and Mustafa Kemal very much in favour of the latter. When Enver himself planned to intervene in the Turkish War of Independence during the military crisis against the advancing Greek army in the summer of 1921, Mustafa Kemal launched a propaganda campaign depicting Enver as a Bolshevik agent and reckless

adventurer—very much in tune with the contemporary British propaganda.[79] Even after the Turkish forces were victorious at the decisive Battle of Sakarya in September 1921 and Enver desperately left for Turkestan, British officials continued to believe that Enverists could topple Mustafa Kemal.[80] Nevertheless, they reckoned that Enver's return was a more bitter pill to swallow than settling for the Ankara government. Intentionally or unintentionally, clandestine plots helped Turkey's case in the making of the diplomatic settlement that culminated at the Lausanne Treaty, signed by the Ankara government and cementing its international recognition. In fact, given their potency as a leverage on official negotiations, real or pretended secret plots can themselves be considered as a form of non-official, revolutionary diplomacy.

Transnational conference diplomacy as back door to the peace conferences

Citizen diplomacy, in the form of public propaganda and petitioning, and the kind of transnational revolutionary diplomacy that rested on secret plots and revolutionary alliances, used different instruments out of the toolbox of unofficial diplomacy. There was yet another instrument widely employed by Ottoman-Turkish activists: transnational conference diplomacy. The democratic pressures on the international system after the First World War, especially in form of demands for national self-determination and ethno-religious minority rights, as well as the broad public attention and press coverage that accompanied the peace-making had altered the conventional forms of conference diplomacy.[81] The Allies agreed to hear selected representatives from certain nations and minority groups who were not part of official delegations. Those who were not heard—such as communists, socialists, or many voices from colonized countries and minority groups—organized their own conferences to discuss the future global order and to protest or influence the official Peace Conference.[82]

Conferences also played a crucial role in the local mobilization of the Turkish War of Independence. The foundation of the National Struggle was rooted in the formation of nearly thirty local conferences across Anatolia and Thrace, ultimately culminating in the foundation of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara in 23 April 1920.[83] These domestic conferences were inspired by Wilsonian ideas of national self-determination, Soviet-style autonomous local governments, and the Unionist calls for the mobilization of local committees of defence of rights.[84] While they played a crucial role for the organization of a united front against the Allied peace settlement, their direct international outreach and diplomatic potency remained limited.

Meanwhile, Ottoman-Turkish activists in Europe tried to approach the Paris Peace Conference. But almost none of them—except for the official Ottoman delegation and Şerif Pasha for the Ottoman League—managed to address the Allied peacemakers in person. Other activists strategically used transnational conferences in Europe as back doors to reach an international audience. One of them was the former CUP official and Turkish Club member Reşit Saffet (Atabinen) who visited two different internationalist meetings in Berne in 1919 to defend Turkish national interests: the conference of the liberal-pacifist International Conference for the League of Nations and the International Labour and Socialist Conference.[85] Halil Halid also tried to influence the debates on Turkey and the Armenian Question at this socialist conference by publishing two pamphlets and calling the socialists to side with Turkey against British imperialism.[86]

In addition, Talat Pasha tried to influence the same socialist conference where the Georgian delegation had agreed to defend the Turkish cause against Greeks and Armenians.[87] When Talat Pasha held a secret meeting with Belgian socialist Camille Huysmans, who was the Secretary-General of the Socialist International,[88] Huysmans advised him to invest more efforts in propaganda in order to communicate their cause to the international public.[89]

As their engagement with the Socialist Conference indicates, Ottoman-Turkish activists looked not only to platforms that fell into the spectrum of liberal internationalism and Wilsonianism. On both ends of the spectrum of internationalism, the Unionists also entered both the revanchist-nationalist milieus of Europe and Bolshevik internationalist circles in Moscow that sailed under the flag of anti-imperialism. The Unionists in Berlin were affiliated with the German branch of League of Oppressed Peoples (*Vereinigung Vergewaltigter Völker*).[90] Together with representatives from Ireland, India, and others, Talat's aide-de-camp Arif Cemil (Denker) held a speech at its Berlin congress in Hotel Adlon.[91] Talat and Enver were also affiliated with Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Lega dei Popoli Oppressi* in Rome.[92] Disappointed by the post-armistice developments, which culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres by the Istanbul government in August 1920, other Ottoman-Muslim Turkish turned East—towards pan-Islamic and communist internationalism.

The Turkish communist leader Mustafa Suphi, who had already hosted a Turkish Socialist Congress in July 1918, was one of several delegates from Turkey to attend the Baku Congress of the Oppressed Peoples of the East in September 1920.[93] The Comintern had organized the congress and invited the toilers from Turkey and other Eastern nations to wage a 'holy war' against colonialism and capitalism. However, the call for participants did not address the Ankara government directly but invited independent delegates from Turkey. Naciye, a young communist woman from Turkey, gave a speech at the congress in which she announced a great awakening after years, if not centuries, of oppression in the East.[94] Among the Turkish delegates in Baku, there were not only committed communists, but also an official delegation of the Ankara government as well as Enver Pasha who supported the continued struggle of Muslims against European imperialism.[95] The Soviet leadership decided to support the Ankara government even though they knew that the Kemalists envisioned a capitalist economy and were suppressing the local communist party.[96] After the Baku Congress, Enver founded the Union of Muslim Revolutionary Societies (*İslam İhtilal Cemiyetleri İttihadı*) in Moscow to form an Islamic International under Turkey's leadership.[97] Affiliated pan-Islamic conferences took place in Berlin, Munich, and elsewhere, all vociferously supporting the Turkish national struggle.[98] In co-opting the pan-Islamic movement of Enver and his friends abroad, Mustafa Kemal and his companions held an international Muslim congress near Sivas in early 1921 under the leadership of the Sheikh Ahmad Sharif al-Sanusi from Libya.[99] An anti-imperial and pan-Islamist movement that more openly approached the Paris Peace Conference and afterwards the League of Nations to speak on behalf of the Turkish cause was the Indian Khilafat Movement. Both Hindu and Muslim Indian anticolonial nationalisms channelled their critique of the British rule by supporting a campaign for the Ottoman Caliphate. During the Khilafat delegation's visit to European capitals, they not only met with European statesmen but also with Turkish nationalists.[100] Mustafa Kemal's movement also enjoyed the support of other pan-Islamic

groups, although it would not stop it from abolishing the Caliphate in 1924 once the new Republic of Turkey had been internationally acknowledged.[101] Many different actors from Turkey contributed to establishing ties between the Ankara government and transnational networks of communism, anti-imperialism, and pan-Islamism. In the end, however, it was the Ankara government that managed to gain control over those relations.

There were also semi-official occasions for transnational conference diplomacy where delegations could attempt to influence the League of Nations. Since the League of Nations itself did not offer a platform for Ottoman-Turkish protest, as Turkey was not invited to join the League prior to the Lausanne Conference, Turkish actors again fell back on alternative, transnational platforms. In late 1921, Grand Vizier Ahmed Tevfik Pasha had received news from the Ottoman foreign ministry informing him about a planned congress of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies in Prague. The federation brought together League of Nations support societies from different countries, without requiring those countries to be League member states. It was a non-governmental organization with close ties to the League. Ahmed Tevfik Pasha decided to form a League of Nations Society (*Cemiyet-i Akvam'a Müzareheret Cemiyeti*) to be able to participate at the Prague congress. Hence, unlike in the United States or Great Britain, the foundation of a League of Nations Society in Turkey did not spring from a broad civic initiative, but from the directives of the Istanbul government.[102] Its twenty-five founding members consisted of well-known figures from political and public cultural life such as İsmail Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu) and Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu).[103] Among the members were also the Unionist Reşit Saffet and the liberal Ahmet Reşit. Some women, including Selma Rıza, also took part. The three delegates who travelled to Prague in June 1922 were Ahmed İhsan (Tokgöz) and Ethem (Menemencioğlu), both civil servants in the Ottoman foreign office, as well as Mehmet Cemil (Bilsel), a law professor at Istanbul.[104] The semi-official character of the delegation is underlined by the fact that the Istanbul government paid for their travel expenses and insisted that at least one of the participants should be a state official.[105] The Turkish League of Nations Society had ties to both, the Sultan's government in Istanbul and the revolutionary government in Ankara, which is not surprising given that Grand Vizier Ahmed Tevfik Pasha had already acknowledged the legitimacy of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara during the London Conference in February 1921. The Ankara government had asked Ahmed Tevfik to initiate the foundation of the Society in Istanbul. The decision came after the Battle of Sakarya in September 1921, which had created new facts on the ground, and the Ankara government needed to push for international recognition and acceptance of the National Pact.[106] The Society's statutes were expressly aligned with the territorial vision of the National Pact.[107] The case, hence, shows that the Ankara government as well as the Istanbul government not only endorsed the pro-national engagement of citizens in transnational conferences and organizations. In some cases, they directly collaborated in sponsoring civic internationalism.[108]

The Prague congress allowed the Turkish delegates to present their positions at an influential international forum, notwithstanding Turkey's non-membership in the League of Nations. Ahmed Tevfik Pasha wanted Turkish delegates to participate at the congress because he suspected that 'our enemies' might spread 'lies' (*tezvirat*) and propaganda.[109] One issue of concern were minorities, used by some parties, especially

the Greek government, and the Greek League of Nations Society, to delegitimize the Ankara government. The humanitarian situation of Christians in the Middle East was also a major topic in the International Federation of League of Nations Societies. The British League of Nations Union under its president David Davies even advocated the partition of Turkey, the separation of Istanbul, and the establishment of foreign mandates—all in the name of humanitarian interests.[110] At the Prague congress, the general secretary of the Federation, Théodore Ruyssen, presented a report by the committee for minority issues. It spoke about the past 'policy of extermination repeatedly practiced by the Ottomans against the Armenians'. It also mentioned complaints from the Greek League of Nations Society claiming that Turkey's 'systematic program of extermination'[111] was continuing under the National Forces.[112] Ruyssen suggested to urge the League of Nations to take steps to protect Christians in Asia Minor. The Turkish delegates were alarmed. They, in turn, accused the Greek delegation of massacres against Muslim civilians during the Greek occupation of Izmir and their following retreat from Anatolia. While partly acknowledging the war crimes against Armenians, they nevertheless refused to accept any responsibility, only blaming the former Unionist government.[113] Ironically, the Unionists in Berlin were making the very same arguments about 'Greek abominations' in their propaganda.[114] The conference in Prague took place only a few weeks after the Third London Conference in March 1922 had once again demonstrated the Allies' will to hold on to certain territorial stipulations of the Treaty of Sèvres, such as an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia and the Greek claims on Izmir and Eastern Thrace. Fighting for sovereignty and the territorial demands of the National Pact therefore constituted the main goal of the League of Nations Society. Doing so five months before the start of the Lausanne Peace Conference in November 1922 also meant preparing the ground for the Ankara government and its official diplomacy, since the Istanbul government was not represented at the Lausanne conference after the Grand National Assembly had pre-emptively abolished the Sultanate. The Turkish League of Nations Society can be seen as part of broader transnational dynamics that accompanied both the Lausanne Peace Conference and the consolidation of the Kemalist republic.[115] Internationalistic fora of across the political spectrum—including liberalism, socialism, communism, pan-Islamism, and ethnonationalist revanchism—provided platforms and back doors for non-state diplomats excluded from the official negotiations to gain international visibility for their diplomatic cause.[116] Unlike their ideological plurality might suggest, those platforms had a unifying and strengthening effect on the National Struggle. Although activists with opposing views and even adversaries of the Ankara government did participate in some of those conferences, it was ultimately the Kemalist leadership that gained control over the Turkish diplomacy represented at those fora.

Conclusion

Highlighting transnational dynamics of diplomacy helps us understand the role of states and statehood within the international system. The New Diplomatic History approach demonstrates that diplomacy is more inclusive and diverse than state-centric approaches have long claimed. Especially in times of international turmoil, such as during the aftermath of the First World War, state structures and diplomatic privileges eroded and made way for non-state actors to enter international affairs. This non-state

perspective is essential in understanding the history of the Turkish War of Independence because Turkey's statehood was fundamentally reconstructed after a contentious process in which multiple actors had been rivalling each other. There are, to be sure, continuities in terms of military-bureaucratic personnel, state institutions, and political ideas from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. But this continuity shall not overshadow the competition and conflict among seemingly connatural actors, like Unionists and Kemalists, in their attempt to take control of the situation in post-Ottoman Turkey. Nor shall it obscure the convergence of previously opposing groups, like the liberal and nationalist factions of the Young Turks, in their struggle for national sovereignty under the conditions of European hegemony.

Neither petitions nor propaganda could alone alter the course of international diplomacy. The same is true for more hands-on attempts to intervene into the postwar developments. Neither revolutionaries plotting transnational alliances across borders nor delegates representing their nation at transnational conferences can alone explain the shifts in international relations. This article does not claim to trace the direct causality of transnational forces on diplomacy. Instead, it illustrates the social complexity of the international system, where diplomatic decision-making is commonly marked by (mis) perceptions, indirect effects, and unintended outcomes in an uncertain and chaotic context in which many actors in different places interacted with one another.[117] Looking into the role of transnational dynamics of diplomacy helps us provincialize the role of official diplomatic conferences and treaties in international history. Instead of magnifying the agency of diplomats and ministers who steer and manoeuvre state behaviour and gamble, bluff, and negotiate behind closed doors, we need to think of diplomacy as the final settlement of a more complex and quotidian process that is more inclusive of human agency and broader in scope than what professional diplomacy permits. Without doubt, hard facts on the ground, such as the military dominance of the Ankara Government in 1922, are a major force in shaping peace settlements but not necessarily the only one. As this article has shown, petitions, propaganda, transnational conferencing, and revolutionary plots became crucial factors in shaping experiences and expectancies that culminated in a peace settlement.

While taking a decentralized approach, it would be a similar mistake, however, to deny the central role of states compared to non-state actors. Despite—or perhaps precisely because of—the erosion of the state monopoly on diplomacy, statehood became a contentious capital. The more material and immaterial state capital the Ankara government accumulated through means of effective governance, the more official and sovereign its diplomacy became. This increasing monopolization of Turkey's foreign representation at the hands of Ankara's diplomats and deputies, the article argues, had an absorbing effect: Whether intentionally or not, different non-official actors, through their struggle for Turkey's sovereignty, contributed to the international recognition of the revolutionary government and its diplomatic monopoly—even if they might have had different agendas than the leadership in Ankara. Transnational dynamics, in other words, gravitated towards the state and helped manifest its sovereignty. Therefore, the diplomatic history of the Turkish War of Independence should feature this myriad of petitions, propaganda, and plots coming from competing and collaborating actors that collectively constructed the idea of Turkey's sovereignty long before the military victory in Anatolia and the diplomatic victory in Lausanne.

Notes

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3. In this transitional period, we use the terms Ottoman Empire and Turkey interchangeably, as contemporaries did. For a discussion, see Maurus Reinkowski, *Geschichte der Türkei: Von Atatürk in die Gegenwart*, C.H. Beck Verlag, München, 2021, pp. 40–41.
4. On citizen diplomacy in the context of the First World War cf. D. S. Patterson, *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I*, Routledge, New York, 2007. For the history of transnational activism in the Middle East, see A. Arsan, '"This Age Is the Age of Associations". Committees, Petitions, and the Roots of Interwar Middle Eastern Internationalism', *Journal of Global History* 7, 2012, pp. 166–188.
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6. See the classic accounts by S. R. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy, 1918–1923: Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish National Movement*, Sage, London, 1975; R. H. Davison, 'Turkish Diplomacy from Mudros to Lausanne', in G. A. Craig and F. Gilbert (eds), *The Diplomats 1919–1939*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1952, pp. 172–209. See also more recent works: B. Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919–2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents*, The University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2010; W. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, 3rd edition, Routledge, New York, 2013. A new account of Kemalist diplomacy that also includes transnational and cultural factors, yet only cursorily covers the period of the War of Independence, is A. Bein, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East. International Relations in the Interwar Period*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017.
7. See the classic study by M. R. Berman and J. E. Johnson (eds), *Unofficial Diplomats*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977.
8. For a general introduction see: H. Alloul and M. Auwers, 'What is (New in) New Diplomatic History', *Journal of Belgian History* XLVIII(4), 2018, pp. 112–122.; E. Manela, 'International Society as a Historical Subject', *Diplomatic History* 44(2), 2020, pp. 184–209. On new approaches to Turkish Foreign Policy see H. Papuççular and D. Kuru, 'Introduction: Transcending the State—A Transnational Account of Turkish Foreign Policy', in H. Papuççular and Kuru (eds), *A Transnational Account of Turkish Foreign Policy*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 3–17.
9. F. Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 234: 'all that appears to be "non-state" may not, in fact, turn out to be so'.
10. On transnational dynamics of postwar Ottoman-Turkish activism, see C. Liebisch-Gümüş, *Verflochtene Nationsbildung. Die Neue Türkei und der Völkerbund, 1918–38*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Berlin, 2020; A. Yenen, *The Young Turk Aftermath. Making Sense of Transnational Contentious Politics at the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1918–1922*, PhD thesis, University of Basel, 2016; published online in 2019), https://doi.org/10.5451/unibas-007110817. For a general account of the Peace Conference and its publicity, see: M. MacMillan, *Peacemakers. The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War*, Murray, London, 2001. On recent developments in historiography, see R. Gerwarth, 'The

Sky beyond Versailles: The Paris Peace Treaties in Recent Historiography', *Journal of Modern History* 93(4), 2021, pp. 896–930.

11. *La Civilisation Turque en Asie-Mineure. Pour la Défense des Droits Légitimes de la Nationalité Turque*, Turc-Yourdou de Lausanne, Lausanne, 1919; *La Turquie devant le tribunal mondial. Son passé, son présent, son avenir*, Congrès National, Istanbul, 1919.
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17. *Cemiyet-i Akvam'a Müzaharat Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi*, Istanbul 1922 (1338 R), p. 5.
18. S. Karal Akgün and M. Uluğtekin, *Hilal-i Ahmer'den Kızılay'a*, Kızılay Yayınları, Ankara, 2000, p. 253.
19. Rumbold (Berne), report on activities of two Turkish ladies from the Red Crescent Society, April 2, 1919, Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office records [FO], 371/4141; Müller (Berne) to Auswärtiges Amt (Berlin), March 19, 1919, and April 3, 1919, PA-AA, R 13,565; Calthorpe (Istanbul) to Lord Curzon (London), July 10, 1919, FO 4142/107162. See also Karal Akgün/Uluğtekin, *op. cit.*, 174.
20. Petition, July 2, 1919, League of Nations Archives [LONA] R1447 28–276.
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23. Kieser, *Vorkämpfer*, pp. 85–86.
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25. Ahmed Réchid, *Lettre Ouverte à M. W Wilson, Président des Etats-Unis d'Amérique*, Imprimerie du Journal, Geneva, 1919, p. 10.
26. Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, June 17, 1919, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. IV, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1943, pp. 509–512.
27. Ahmet Reşit Rey, *Gördüklerim, Yaptıklarım 1890–1922*, Türkiye Yayınaevi, Istanbul, 1945, p. 243.

28. Mehmet Şerif Pasha, Statement, Churchill Archives Centre [CHAR] 2/107/18–19.
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30. A. Yenen, 'Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence Between Empire and Nationalism' *Die Welt des Islams* 61(1), 2021, pp. 72–112.
31. E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.
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33. Dossier on Turkish Intrigues in Switzerland, September 13, 1919, FO 371/4142, 128926, p. 259.
34. Whittall, The Nearer East and the British Empire, June 5, 1919, FO 371/4142, 90575, pp. 71–73.
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36. Whittall, The Nearer East and the British Empire, June 5, 1919, FO 371/4142, 90575, pp. 69–70.
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38. E. J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Rôle of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905–1926*, Brill, Leiden, 1984, p. 116.
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