

**Between the Islands and the Mainland:  
The Economic Relations of the Dodecanese with Turkey in the Interwar Period**

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**Abstract**

This study deals with the economic relations of the Dodecanese Islands with the Turkish mainland in the interwar period. It shows that the finalization of the Italian sovereignty in the islands after the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 brought immense amount of change and legal/economic problems for the daily lives of the islanders as well as for the Turkish-Italian political relations. The prohibition of fishing and sponge fishing activities to the foreigners in the Turkish territorial waters and restrictive trade policies towards the islands isolated the Dodecanesian population in economic terms throughout the interwar years. Although there were diplomatic contacts in certain periods in order to solve the issues, both the national stance of the parties and the strained nature of the Turkish-Italian relations of the time prevented a solution. In this sense, this paper summarizes these economic problems within the framework of the diplomatic relations based on the documents from the archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## **Introduction**

Two years ago, when I was making research in the archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome for my dissertation basically on the importance of the Dodecanese in Turkish foreign and security policy between 1923 and 1947, I realized that the folders were full of incidents and colloquia concerning the economic relations of the islands with Turkey. That was a novel phenomenon at least for Turkish historiography which has adopted a mere security oriented approach towards the islands for this period; similar to the Greek literature's focus on the political and cultural character of the Italian colonialism. Thus, this paper, specifically based on the resources from the abovementioned archive, scrutinizes the Dodecanese's Asia Minor related economic problems which were affected by the political scene for sure.

This paper argues that after the transition of the Dodecanese to Italy by the 15<sup>th</sup> article of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, the islands became economically isolated owing to the newly drawn boundaries with the changing citizenship statuses. In this sense, three issues seemed to occupy an important place in the lives of the islanders vis-à-vis Turkey: the prohibition of the Turkish territorial waters to the islanders for fishing, restrictive trade policies, and the properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia. It should be noted that all these issues symbolized an economic matter for ordinary people while the interested parties regarded them as highly political and legal.

### **Vague Maritime Boundaries, Clear Separations: The Formation of the Economic Problems**

The Dodecanese, the inhabitants of which were mainly Greek, with a small group of Muslims and Jews, was occupied by Italy in 1912 during the Ottoman-Italian war over Libya and never returned back to the Ottoman Empire. The islands, under occupation until 1923, were given to Italy legally in 1923 by the Lausanne Treaty. Thereafter, the territorial waters of the Asia Minor were separated from the ones of the Dodecanese as two different countries despite the inexistence of a decisive maritime border.

The economy of the islands in the Dodecanese group had depended on trade made with the Anatolian coasts since the pre-modern period. Indeed, this feature of the Dodecanese economy did not change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century either. Apart from the economically developed islands of Rhodes and Kos, the lands of which were suitable for agriculture and animal husbandry, the islands were living with fishing, sponge fishing, and trade with Anatolia. It should be underlined that although the trade with Anatolia was so important for the islands, only a minor part of it was being made through legal ways. For example, Simi and Castellorizo Islands were particularly famous for their smuggling activities with Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

In 1923, after the foundation of the republic, Turkey took some measures vis-à-vis the islands. On the one hand, Ankara prohibited the fishing/sponge fishing activities to the foreigners in the Turkish territorial waters, the boundaries of which were being accepted as three miles at that time.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Turkey began to implement restrictive trade policies vis-à-vis the

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<sup>1</sup> Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, (ASMAE), Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, "Memorandum" 1923.

<sup>2</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, "The Arrests of the Simian fishing Men in the Turkish National Waters," 20 August 1923.

Dodecanese and from time to time closed completely its borders to some islands charging the ships with smuggling, as it had been done to Castellorizo in 1923.<sup>3</sup> It should be emphasized that while some of the measures that Turkey adopted were reflecting a pure general stance regardless of the counter-party's nationality as in the case of limiting fishing only to the co-nationals, some of them were directly targeting the Dodecanese due to specific meaning of the islands in Turkish foreign and security policy. The excessive military fortifications of Italy in the region throughout the interwar period turned the Dodecanese Islands into a point of threat for Asia Minor. Mussolini's aims in terms of reviving the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean with aggressive means reverberated throughout Ankara as a possible Italian landing to Western Anatolia that would be directed from the Dodecanese. Therefore, the above-mentioned measures of Turkey specifically targeting the islands were closely related to the negative environment in the region. Indeed, the tenser the relations between Turkey and Italy based on the fortification dynamic in the islands, the harder the position of Turkish officials towards the Dodecanesian boats practicing fishing or trade, because of Turkey's constant suspect about the possible military character of the individuals and boats in terms of surveillance or espionage,<sup>4</sup> apart from the fear of smuggling.

The prohibition of fishing and the restrictive trade policies of Turkey in this atmosphere, which I prefer to call on the verge of the war due to the aforementioned tension, led to the economic "isolation" of the islands. The Italian Governor of the Dodecanese, Mario Lago, insisted on an agreement that would regulate economic relations between the islands and the Turkish mainland throughout this time frame.<sup>5</sup> According to him, Turkish government's complaints about smuggling activities were groundless due to the fact that they were being practiced reciprocally and even in this closed regime Turkish boats were active as opposed to the Dodecanesian ones.<sup>6</sup> The Governor never refused the smuggling practiced by the islanders, yet he defended the Dodecanesian people by stating that the smuggling was an absolute necessity of life for the poor people of the islands.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the Dodecanese administration indicated the strict rules that Turkey implemented in the coastal areas as the sole reason for smuggling, thus, showing the regular traffic between the shores as the only possible solution.<sup>8</sup> However, due to the tense diplomatic and military ambiance in the Aegean, this desire of the Governor would not be discussed until 1927, by which the Turkish-Italian relations would enter into a relative *détente* period. For the era until 1927, putting an agreement aside, violent incidents occurred frequently in the shores of the two entities. Turkish gendarmes patrolling along the Turkish territorial waters were checking the boats, warning the people, arresting the sailors, and sometimes interfering with guns. For instance, in one of these incidents Turkish guards had opened fire to the Simian fishermen due to their poaching activities in the Turkish territorial waters, and led to the death of one of them.<sup>9</sup> Although such occurrences with casualties were exceptional, the arrests and encounters in the sea were ordinary due to poaching and smuggling. It is necessary to note that after every incident in the sea, diplomatic tension between the officials increased. However,

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<sup>3</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, "Measures against the Ships from Castellorizo," 28 October 1923.

<sup>4</sup> ASMAE Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, "A letter to Orsini," 31 March 1927.

<sup>5</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, "The Closure of Anatolia to Meisians," 25 October 1923.

<sup>6</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, "The Closure of Anatolia to Meisians," 13 October 1923.

<sup>7</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, "Turkey and the Dodecanese," 13 March 1927.

<sup>8</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, "Good Neighborhood Accords between the Islands and the Anatolia," 23 May 1927.

<sup>9</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso "The killing of the Dodecanesian Sailor by the Turkish Gendarmes," 14 December 1927.

despite the tension and contacts, the problems of the islanders regarding the economic isolation could not be solved.

Another issue that could not be solved in the meantime was the properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia. Similar to the traditional fishing pattern regarding the usage of the Aegean Sea's both coasts, some segment of the Dodecanese population were using both the islands and the Asia Minor for living, making agriculture, and exercising trade activities. After the legal separation of the two coasts from each other, these practices either decreased or came to an end, restricting the economic activities of the islanders further. The properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia symbolized an economic problem for the islanders while representing an eminently political issue for the administrations. Actually, the property issue, like smuggling, was not a unilateral problem for the states because the Italians were also uncomfortable with the land registries belonging to the Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

The status of the property owned by the islanders in Anatolia was ambiguous in a way that they were not under the legal category of the Greek exchangees' properties in Turkey. According to one correspondence between Rhodes and Rome, there were thousands of petitions by the Dodecanesians who wondered the fate of their properties in Turkey.<sup>11</sup> According to the Italians, possible way of solution to this problem in terms of restitution was the foundation of a committee similar to the Turkish-Greek joint commission.<sup>12</sup> However, Turkey's relations with the islands after 1923 are kept in mind, it is not surprising that such an initiative did not take place. Therefore, the strategy of the Italians on this issue evolved from the desire of a commission to appealing to the Turkish authorities based on the single cases rather than the maximum questions.<sup>13</sup>

### **Economic Matters in Diplomacy: The Talks of the Castellorizo Islets**

After 1927, Turkish-Italian relations entered into a *détente* phase in which the highly debated issue of the islets dependent on Castellorizo Island was discussed. The islet negotiations began in 1927 and ended in 1932 with a settlement. However, the other matters that were discussed around the islet question lasted until 1934. One of them was the economic ties of the Dodecanese with the facing coast. Actually, official correspondence shows that the Governor of the islands was much more interested in an economic agreement between the Dodecanese and Turkey than in a treaty that would define the sovereignty of the islets and maritime frontiers because he usually stated that the Dodecanese could not live well commercially without the Turkish mainland.<sup>14</sup> Since fishing rights of the islanders together with a more liberal trade regime strictly for the local products were vital for the lives of the islanders, the islets issue was negotiated vis-à-vis a commercial neighborhood treaty specifically by the Italian side. Likewise, this stance of Rome was one of the reasons for the reluctance of the Italians for an arbitration process for the islets in The Hague, through which only the islet issue would be negotiated.

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<sup>10</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 989 Dodecanneso, "Registries of the Landed Property in Rhodes and Kos," 15 April 1926.

<sup>11</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 986 Dodecanneso, "The Properties of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia," 8 October 1923.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> ASMAE, Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, "The Property of the Dodecanesians in Anatolia," 26 January 1927.

<sup>14</sup> ASMAE Pacco 990 Dodecanneso, "Activity and Hostility between Turkey and the Dodecanese," 27 February 1927.

However, despite the insistence of the Italians, Turkish side clearly stated that the rule about fishing/sponge fishing could not be changed.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Turkish officials were much more open to discussion for the commercial activities as opposed to the fishing rights although even in this aspect their understanding was prone to an informal approach in terms of softening implementation rather than constituting a formal agreement. Parallel to this understanding, a commercial agreement that the Italian side desired could not be realized although a treaty about the partition of the islets and a maritime boundary between Castellorizo and Turkish coasts were signed in 1932. However, despite its failure, the negotiation process continued until 1934 both for a general commercial agreement between Dodecanese and Turkey and for some usage rights specifically for the Castellorizo population in certain islets, which were given to Turkey by 1932 treaty and were used by the islanders for navigation, animal husbandry, and making lime.

By 1934, none of them had been achieved and additionally the détente period in the Aegean had come to an end. In the period that the world was running towards a new global war, the tension in the Aegean due to the military stance of Italy ascended. Both the property issue of the Dodecanesians, which remained in the backstage even in the détente period, and the commercial relations together with fishing rights became irrelevant because those kinds of issues were necessitating a thorough diplomatic contact which was not the case for Turkey and Italy after 1934. While the former issue continued with the individual indemnification cases initiated by the Dodecanesians by appealing to the Turkish authorities without decisive results, the discussions for the latter were terminated by the parties, leading to a return to the dynamics of the pre-détente period.

## **Conclusion**

The isolation of the islanders, as the Governor called, had not ceased when the interwar period came to an end. During this time frame, the concept of “border” became one of the most important aspects of the Dodecanesians’ daily lives because of the loss of a traditional economic area with which there were absolute commercial, agricultural, and territorial bonds. In this sense, the archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have plenty of documents that designate the petitions made to authorities and cases of incidents occurred in the sea. These documents, while showing the problems came up in the post-1923 era for the islanders, also display how the bilateral diplomatic relations shaped and influenced these questions. This paper was an attempt to summarize these economic issues and the diplomatic processes around them in the light of the Italian official documents. As a last point, it should be noted that this field necessitates further research and analysis in order to go beyond the strategy, colonialism, and nationalism oriented studies concerning the Dodecanese of the time.

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<sup>15</sup>ASMAE, Pacco Dodecanneso 990, “Islets of Castellorizo,” 18 November 1927.

**Title:** Their ‘Apple of Discord’ or the Apple of Their Eye: How Greece helped the British to Secure Eastern Mediterranean and Western European Security, 1947-1948.

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### **Abstract**

In writing of one of the most well-known books relating to Modern Greek History, CM Woodhouse referred to Greece as the “Apple of Discord;” the phrase being used to signify Greece as the crux of an argument between Wartime allies that could have led to another world war. However, seen from another perspective, rather than causing discord, the Greek crises of the 1940s contributed greatly to formation of the post-war alliances among nations that only a few years before had been embroiled in war.

This paper attempts to show a new analysis of the role that the British played in the dramatic shift in American foreign policy that was manifested in 1947-48, that led directly to these alliances, namely NATO and the Western European Union. To achieve this shift (which also included support of British strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean) I argue that the British used Greece, first as a way to draw the United States further into European affairs, and then as a way to anchor the Americans in Europe, achieving a guarantee of security for the Eastern Mediterranean and for Western Europe. Drawing on both published and unpublished British and American sources and using them side-by-side, I examined the issue of “real” perceptions about the conflict in Greece, and what it represented to them for Western European and Eastern Mediterranean security.

To support these hypotheses, I used mainly the British and American documents relating to Greece from 1947 and 1948 in an attempt to clearly explain how these nations made and implemented policy towards Greece during this crucial period in Greek history. In so doing, I also tried to explain how American foreign policy in general changed from its pre-war focus on non-intervention, to the American foreign policy to which the world has become accustomed since the late 1940s.

In 1948 the United States National Security Council (NSC) concluded that the security of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean was vital to American security, and should any one of Iran, Italy, Turkey or Greece fall under Soviet influence, it would threaten the security of the whole area. The NSC also concluded that the United States must use all of its economic and possibly military assets to guarantee the security of the region by strengthening the nations in question.<sup>1</sup> Not only was this in stark contrast with US international Policy up to 1945, but it was completely in line, not only with British strategic interests for the area, but also for future British planning. This was the dramatic shift in American Foreign Policy that until the mid to late 1940s had been torn between greater world-wide intervention or retreating again into isolationism.

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<sup>1</sup> Report to the National Security Council (NSC 5) January 6<sup>th</sup> 1948, FRUS 1948, Vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Multilateral Relations, pp. 1-732) pp. 2-8.

## Introduction

Before I begin to present some of my findings, I would like to draw your attention to the following chart. I will then explain the observations that inspired the research for my dissertation

Country	Years	Party	Desired / supported regime type in Greece	Desired / supported international Policy
Britain	1940-45	Conservative	Monarchy	Empire / Alliances
	1945-48	Labour	Monarchy	Empire /Alliances Brussels Pact / NATO
	1948-50	Labour	Monarchy	Empire / Alliances / NATO / WEU,
United States	1940-45	Democrats	No interest/ democracy	Isolationism / Winning the War
	1945-48	Democrats	Republic / democracy	Internationalism (UN), Containment
	1948-50	Democrats	Monarchy	Empire / Alliances/ NATO / WEU,

The above (albeit over-simplified) chart presented a number of interesting questions to me, but the main one was wanting to understand the shift from the Roosevelt post-war vision embodied by the UN, to basically its antithesis, supported by Truman; NATO and the lesser known Western European Union. Rather than continuing to speak in generalities, in order to briefly illustrate my hypotheses I would like to present some specific findings relating to British efforts to influence US policy.

## 1946 - British attempts to influence US policy / opinion.

W.H. McNeil, a British liaison officer who had served in Greece during the war was at this time serving as a military attaché to the American Embassy in Athens. He wrote a report which was endorsed by US Ambassador MacVeagh, and then sent to Secretary of State Acheson for consideration. In the report (pre-approved by the British War Department) McNeil predicted that the worsening Greek economy, coupled with a British troop withdrawal would lead to a right-wing dictatorship which would inevitably lead to more civil unrest, foreign intervention and finally to a Communist takeover. The last stage would then invariably lead Greece, like the countries of Eastern Europe, to fall under the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>2</sup> This report can be seen as an effort of the British to prepare the United States to assume greater involvement in Greece in the near future. Also in 1946, George Kennan, working at the US embassy in Moscow, sent an analysis to the US government. In it he stated, “*While Soviet power is impervious to the logic of reason, it is highly sensitive to the logic of force.*”<sup>3</sup> The force he was talking about was economic, but as his ‘long telegram’ circulated through the US government over the next year, it gained more of a military connotation.

## 1947 – Timing of US intervention in Greece:

In combination with Kennan’s long telegram, by 1947 the British were increasingly successful at convincing the US of communist intentions to control Greece. They presented the theory that a failure in Greece would lead to the loss of Turkey, the Dardanelles, access to the Middle East, and then the loss of Italy, France and Germany (what would later be called the ‘*domino theory*’<sup>4</sup> and was stated by the NSC in 1948), became a driving force behind the British-assisted American belief that intervention in Greece was vital for the preservation of American interests world-wide.

On February 19<sup>th</sup> 1947 Bevin decided that the time was finally right to force the United States to directly assume responsibility for British interests in Greece. He instructed the British ambassador to the United States, Lord Inverchapel, to deliver a memorandum to the US State Department regarding the situation in Greece. It expressed the British desire to have the United States to replace the British and to assist the Greek armed forces and economy since, Greece was on the verge of collapse. This aid was recommended because Britain’s aid to Greece would expire on March 31<sup>st</sup> 1947, after which Great Britain would be unable to grant any further assistance whatsoever.

This memorandum initially shocked the State Department and it quickly decided to convince the American people and Congress of the need to for the United States to assume a more significant role ‘in the direction of world affairs,’ and to seize the opportunity given to it by Britain’s decision.<sup>5</sup> Back in Washington, the American response to the announced British withdrawal in Greece was rapid. The British declaration, issued on February 21<sup>st</sup> 1947, was answered by the US State Department on Feb 26<sup>th</sup>. On March 12<sup>th</sup>, in a move that made the

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<sup>2</sup> MacVeagh to Byrnes (2100) January 19<sup>th</sup> 1946, FRUS 1946, Vol. VII, The Near East and Africa, pp. 97-99.

<sup>3</sup> Kennan to Byrnes (511) February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1946, FRUS 1946, VOL. VI, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, pp. 696-709.

<sup>4</sup> First used by President Eisenhower in 1954.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, pp. 243-244.



United States' opposition to the expansion of Soviet influence official, President Truman addressed the US Congress about giving aid to Greece and Turkey. Truman informed the US Congress that 'assistance is imperative if Greece is to survive as a free nation.'<sup>6</sup>

### **1948: US response to the British declaration**

A year later the military situation in Greece had improved for the Greek government, and the British were nervous that in light of these improvements, the US may consider reducing its aid to Greece. Through Ambassador Franks, Bevin informed the State Department that he believed that the continued presence of the British and American military missions in Greece constituted a 'steadying influence' there. This was especially important he argued, considering that attacks 'from within and without' would continue for the foreseeable future, and that the Attlee-Bevin administration could hardly justify continuing a British military presence in Greece should the US remove theirs. Marshall informed Franks that there would be no discussion of reductions until at least the following December when the situation in Greece would be re-examined. Off the record, Marshall offered a final 'reassurance' to the British.

...if we find it necessary to withdraw our military mission from Greece, I fully expect that the US Government will give the British Government more notice of this intention than Mr. Bevin gave me in February 1947 in regard to the necessity of the British Government to discontinue its support to Greece.<sup>7</sup>

Marshall's statement was a clear indicator of US opinion; they were still angry to some degree about the timing of the British declaration from the previous year. It also shows that in February 1947, the State Department was shocked by the British declaration that their aid to Greece would be expiring. The fact that Bevin also needed to justify a continuing British Military presence in Greece at this time indicates firstly, that the British had deceived the Americans in February 1947 about how weak they really were and secondly, that well into 1948, Bevin was still holding onto the notion that Britain had to maintain a troop presence in Greece to have a say internationally on par with the Soviets and the Americans.

Also in early 1948, Bevin commented on the threat that communism posed in the Far East stating:

in the Middle East and possibly in certain Far Eastern countries such as India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Indonesia and Indo-China, Communism will make headway unless a strong spiritual and moral lead . . . is given against it, and we are in a good position to give such a lead.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Truman's speech of March 12<sup>th</sup> 1947, quoted in: (R 3426 / 50 / 19), BDFA, Series F Europe, Part IV, Vol. 12, pp. 138-141.

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between Franks and Marshall, September 7<sup>th</sup> 1948, FRUS 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Multilateral Relations, pp. 1-732) p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> 'Future Foreign Publicity Policy', January 4<sup>th</sup> 1948 (CAB 129 23, CP (48) 8)

Therefore following British policy objectives, being able to have the Americans to commit to Greece, and through it, Western European defence, the Middle and Far East could also be guarded against further communist expansion. Furthermore, Bevin advocated for a more integrated Europe, which appealed to the United States and was designed to encourage American aid to Europe generally but to Britain specifically.<sup>9</sup> Bevin proposed the idea of a Western Union, backed by the 'power of the United States and the Dominion' to shore-up the countries bordering the Soviet sphere in the East. In outlining his plan, Bevin clearly stated that both the USA and Britain should lead the proposed union, and that those nations which had experienced firsthand Nazi occupation would likely be the most willing to support Anglo-American, and to a lesser extent French leadership in such a union whether it was formal or not.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, despite Anglo-American frustration over the Greek situation, Greece was still seen as vital to their interest. The US Director of Near Eastern and African affairs stated that the United States decision to protect Greece had to be stronger than the Soviet will to conquer it in order to prevent the outbreak of a new World War or at least the loss of the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean and possibly even Europe. He therefore recommended that the US prepare 'under certain circumstances' to send troops to Greece.<sup>11</sup>

### **In conclusion:**

In March 1948, Bevin met with US ambassador Lewis Douglas stating that he wanted a conference between Britain, the United States and other Western governments in order to quickly and strongly counter the Communist offensive.<sup>12</sup> Greece became even more important for the British as a symbol because the civil war there was easily marketed as continuing evidence of Soviet plans for world domination. As a result, the British cabinet authorised Bevin to do whatever was necessary to address the 'Threat to Western Civilization.'<sup>13</sup>

The high point for British policy in the late 1940s came on March 11, 1948 when, after Bevin proposed a scheme to guarantee Atlantic security to George Marshall, the Americans responded promptly and positively stating that they were now prepared at once to be engaged in discussions on what would become the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> (NSC 5) January 6<sup>th</sup> 1948, FRUS 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, Multilateral Relations, pp. 2-8. British success at persuading the Americans to support unity of policy with British strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean is shown in a secret National Security Council (NSC) document from January 1948. In the document the NSC stated that for US security interests to be achieved, it would be vital for the US and Britain to work 'along parallel lines.' See also: Kirby, p. 407. Kirby reflects on whether or not Bevin had any real intention of following through on his statements, and quotes the Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak as stating how puzzled he was that Britain never followed through on and sometimes opposed European Integration

<sup>10</sup> Inverchapel to Marshall (840.00/1-1348) January 13<sup>th</sup> 1947, FRUS 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Multilateral Relations, pp. 1-732) pp. 3-6.

<sup>11</sup> Henderson to Marshall (711.69/1-948) January 9<sup>th</sup> 1948, FRUS 1948, Vol. IV, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Multilateral Relations, pp. 1-732) pp. 9-14, subsequent letters, pp. 15-18. Though the US would decide that only clear and external military aggression against Greece would necessitate an armed American response, it was still considered as a real possibility.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas and Bevin, Top Secret record of conversation, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1948; FO 800/460.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Threat to Western Civilisation', March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1948, (CP(48)72, CAB 129/25).

<sup>14</sup> Marshall to Murphy, Germany (403) March 6<sup>th</sup> 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. III, Western Europe, p. 389.

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# Cultural Propaganda and the Project of the British University in Cyprus<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

This paper drawing upon primary sources explores the British strategic planning of establishing a British University in Cyprus. The British possessions in the Eastern Mediterranean were at stake in the aftermath of the First World War. Since the early 1930s the British Foreign Office was eagerly planning the establishment of a University in the Near East region in order to ‘shape the local elites favourably familiar with the culture and values of the West’. The University was considered as the most important and effective channel through which the propagandist ideas could be disseminated in the local intellectual elite. The project was eventually not realised due to the outbreak of the Second World War. The significance of this incomplete project lies in the demonstration of the British grand strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean during the interwar period. While designing the project British Foreign Office had to decide upon the possible sites for establishing the educational institution. In doing so the Foreign Office took into consideration the social and political developments that were taking place in every society in the region. They had reached to the conclusion that Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine and Cyprus were the most suitable options.

This paper seeks to explore and highlight the significance of the notion of the Soft Power and Cultural Propaganda within the imperial strategic planning of the establishment of a University in the Eastern Mediterranean. In doing so, we shall commence reviewing the notion of propaganda and education in order to proceed to the case of the British University in the Middle East. By examining the project undertaken by the British Foreign Office for establishing a British University in the Eastern Mediterranean, this paper will highlight the role of the education and the notion of cultural hegemony. Cultural propaganda was perceived by the Foreign Office as an essential component of Empire’s soft power and legitimacy in its sphere of influence. Moreover, the relationship between ideology and power will be canvassed in order to set out the argument that ideological compliance of the subjects was a *sine qua non* condition for the persistence of the British rule in the Eastern Mediterranean. Overall, this paper drawing upon British archival documents aims to contribute to our understanding of the role of educational institutions in the context of the British Empire.

**Keywords:** Cyprus, Nationalism, Cultural Propaganda

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