

THE EFFECT OF MONTREUX CONVENTION ON TURKISH DIPLOMACY

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The Lausanne Straits Convention, which was signed in 1923 and limiting Turkey's absolute sovereignty over the straits, constituted a situation contrary to Turkey's national interests at a time when a new world war was approaching, and caused deep concern among political decision makers. On the eve of a new war, policy makers who wanted to solve this situation in the most suitable way for Turkey's national interests, convened an international conference in a time when *fait accompli* in international relations were dominant. Contrary to the common tradition of the period, they resolved an international problem by using diplomacy instead of military force, and as a result of this conference, 1936 Montreux Convention was signed. The 1936 Montreux Convention, which had a significant impact on the international relations of the period and even today, deserves to be examined in depth, as it is also a turning point because it has created in the history of Turkish diplomacy.

When bilateral negotiations on Mosul, which was one of the problems that could not be resolved on the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, did not yield results, the issue was taken to the League of Nations and Mosul was left to Iraq under the United Kingdom mandate with the 1926 Ankara Agreement. This situation created a trauma among Turkish policy makers, and it was preferred to solve the problems without taking them to international organizations as much as possible. However, this trauma did not affect Turkey's choice of respecting international law and solving problems using diplomacy without the use of force, and Turkey, despite the trauma she suffered, initiated the convening of the Montreux Conference by calling an international conference to establish its sovereignty in the straits. In an international system dominated by *fait accompli* and where revisionist states such as Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan solved their problems by using military force, Turkey's solving its problems through diplomacy both increased Turkey's international prestige and contributed directly to the logic of Turkish diplomacy to preserve its peaceful identity even in close wartime.

The Montreux Conference also directly affected the multilateralism and transparency identities of Turkish diplomacy. Multilateralism and transparent/open diplomacy in the diplomatic tradition of Turkey, which established its sovereignty over the straits with a

conference attended by all the states that signed the previous treaty and where the views of the participating states were openly discussed, gained a stronger position since this date.

The Montreux Straits Convention is also an important development in terms of determining the parties on which Turkish foreign policy focuses. Turkey, which did not pursue a vindictive foreign policy against the states it waged the War of Independence and was an unyielding defender of the pro-peace status quo after the signing of the peace treaty, adopted Western theses at the Montreux Conference and put Westernism, which is a principle of traditional Turkish foreign policy, at the center of its understanding of diplomacy. In addition, Turkey did not adopt the theses of the Soviet Union, which was a partner against the West during the War of Independence, and as a result of this conference, diplomatic relations between two countries began to deteriorate.

As a result, the 1936 Montreux Convention is a very important development not only in terms of affecting the international relations of the period and even today, but also because it is a turning point in terms of the effects it has created on Turkish diplomacy. The 1936 Montreux Convention, in a period dominated by revisionism, the use of military force and fait accompli in the international system, enabled Turkey to solve its problems by relying on international law and diplomacy, despite the traumas in previous periods, and contributed to Turkey's international prestige and the peaceful identity of Turkish diplomacy. In addition, the Montreux Convention, which directly contributes to the tradition of Turkish diplomacy that focuses on open, transparent, and multilateral relations instead of secret bilateral relations, is also a very important development in determining the partners and rivals of Turkish diplomacy. Turkey re-entered the path of partnership with the West, its traditional partner and rival during the War of Independence, on the contrary, it preferred to limit its diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the successor of its traditional rival, Russian Empire, with which it established a short-term partnership during the War of Independence.