

THE TURKISH-GREEK WAR (1919–1922) IN LIGHT OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

1. *Introduction*

The military and political changes which occurred in Anatolia more than a hundred years ago determined not only the relations between Turkey and Greece, but also the reconstruction of the order in the Eastern Mediterranean. This period of Greek occupation in Anatolia of 1919–1922 was a complicated one and it involved not only the conflict of the two states but also the local rivalries of the Allied Powers, the new diplomacies formed as a result of the Paris Peace Conference and the weak socio-economic systems of the war-weary societies. The prevailing perspectives on the assessment of this period often prioritize national narratives, which may push the complex interaction between international decision-making processes and local dynamics into the background, despite the nuanced debates visible across multi-dimensional archival records. The concept of reorganising the region played a significant role in the minds of the great powers at the time in the case of Anatolia.

From the Paris Peace Conference onwards, the ongoing conflicts of interest between Britain, France, the United States (U.S.), and Italy created a dual pressure mechanism that both encouraged and limited Greece's expansionist policy towards Anatolia. The arguments used by Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos in demanding Western Anatolia on the grounds of a Greek population density claim, combined with the Entente powers' tendency to structure the region according to their own spheres of influence, show that the occupation became an inevitable part of a «grand strategy». However, these strategic calculations frequently diverged from the conditions encountered on the ground, as reflected in a range of contemporary reports highlighting population structures, logistical constraints, local resistance, and internal challenges within the Greek army.

The occupation of Anatolia is still a thorny issue in the historical literature today a hundred years later. While certain strands of Greek and Western historiography have framed the occupation as an effort to establish order or stability, Turkish historiography has predominantly emphasized the social disruption caused by the occupation and the emergence of the National Struggle, reflecting differing interpretative frameworks. However, relying on a single national narrative or a single category of external sources risks presenting a partial view of this highly sensitive conflict. To mitigate methodological limitations and to engage more closely with conditions documented at the local level, this study adopts a multi-archival approach. In addition to British archival materials, namely the files of the Foreign Office, the War Office, and the Cabinet, this research integrates documents from the League of Nations, the Ottoman Archives, American field reports, and Greek military sources. By incorporating these diverse local and international perspectives, the article aims to move beyond a filtered lens and provide a nuanced and multifaceted analysis of the local processes.

This article aims to re-evaluate the prevailing approaches and assumptions regarding the period in question by synthesizing international power politics with local socio-political dynamics. The first section of the study examines the background of the military, logistical, and diplomatic support provided by Britain to Greece, discussing how the decision to invade took shape. The second section examines the advance of the Greek army in Anatolia by confronting British field reports with local Ottoman documentation and civilian testimonies; thus, administrative problems, resistance dynamics, and the impact of the occupation on local society are analyzed through a multi-vocal perspective. The third chapter evaluates the pressures Greece faced internationally as the war dragged on, the process of military collapse, and the ultimate defeat. The concluding chapter examines why the occupation of Anatolia failed, based on the integrated data from the aforementioned diverse archives.

In this regard, the study aims to position the years of occupation not merely as the military narrative of a bilateral war, but as a multi-layered historical process that must be reinterpreted through a rigorous scholarly «recalibration» that values local voices as much as international diplomatic records.

1.1 *Greece's preparations for the occupation of Anatolia and developments in the region*

As a result of World War I, empires around the world began to disintegrate. During the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious powers claimed

rights over certain regions of the empire. According to the Armistice of Mudros signed with the Ottoman Empire on 30 October 1918, the Allied Powers had obtained the right to occupy different regions of the empire in the event of any unrest that might occur in Ottoman territories¹. During World War I, Eleftherios Venizelos wanted Greece to join the war on the side of the Allied Powers, while King Constantine argued that the country should remain neutral. This debate ended in 1917 with the deposition of the King and Greece's entry into the war, following Venizelos' success in gaining the support of Britain². Following Greece's entry into the war, Greek military officials increased their demands on the Allied Powers. For example, at a conference chaired by Lord Milner in November 1918, attended by representatives from France, the U.S., and Greece, it was decided to postpone financial assistance for military matters until the probable date of demobilization of the Greek army was determined. Prime Minister Venizelos was waiting for a clear response from the Allied Powers. Greek officials stated that they would demobilize the Greek army as soon as possible unless the Allied Powers made a specific request of them. The US Treasury Department, however, announced that it would not grant credit to Greece as of 1 January 1919. Throughout 1918, a total of £35,000,000 in aid was provided to Greece, £5,000,000 of which was provided by the U.S., with the remainder provided by France and Britain³.

British military officials complained that the French were indifferent and slow in fulfilling their promises of aid to Greece. Similarly, Greek officials reported that they were in a difficult situation because the clothing needed by the army could not be obtained⁴. As a result, Britain assumed responsibility for meeting the needs of the Greek army⁵. Railways were actively used for the military transport of the Allied Powers. At this point, the Allied Powers agreed that the necessary work should be done to improve the Greek railways. It was decided that the materials to be used during the necessary repairs to the railways would be supplied by Britain and France as soon as possible⁶. In this

¹ A. PITSOULIS, *Greece, Turkey, the Eastern Question and the Treaty of Lausanne 1923* in «Beiträge zur Rechtsgeschichte Österreichs», Vol. 9, No. 2, 2019, p. 460.

² G. YELLICE, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Yunanistan: Çanakkale'den Milli Bölünmeye* in «Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi», Vol. XVI, No. 32, 2016, p. 235.

³ The National Archives, London, (hereafter TNA), Records of the Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 25/28/6-7.

⁴ TNA, CAB 25/28/11.

⁵ TNA, CAB 25/28/17.

⁶ TNA, CAB 25/28/19.

context, in June 1918, the Allied Powers agreed to provide Greece with a fund of 21,000,000 francs for the improvement of the railway line between Piraeus and Thessaloniki⁷. In July 1918, it is known that the Greek army had 7170 officers, 213,750 soldiers, and 43,760 animals that could be used for logistical purposes⁸. France and Britain were in agreement on providing all kinds of support to ensure that the Greek army could continue its mobilization. In addition, Greece would make extensive use of resources on its territory to meet its own military needs⁹. These developments were interpreted as follows by Lieutenant Colonel G.S., who served in the British army: It was stated that the policy of holding private talks with Venizelos regarding support for the Greek army was the more appropriate course of action and that an expert working on the British railways should also be present during the talks. The Lieutenant Colonel emphasized the importance of providing all or part of the planned 21,000,000 francs to Greece without delay. He stated that this payment was urgent in order for Britain to gain control over the railways in Greece¹⁰.

In the report written by Brigadier General W.E. Fairholme, who served as military attaché in Athens on behalf of Britain, on the latest situation of the Greek army on 20 January 1918, stated that the main reason for the slow pace of military movements in Greece was the inadequacy of railway vehicles and that the 300 trucks promised by the British Government to Greece had not yet been delivered to Greece. In addition, it was emphasized that Greece urgently needed 6000 tons of coal and that these issues needed to be addressed immediately. The Allied Powers understood that the Greek army was not in a position to recover quickly. For this reason, Venizelos believed it would be wiser to implement a plan prepared by the French mission, which involved fewer obligations. Furthermore, according to the report, it was stated that the newly reinforced Greek army should not be trusted too much and that it could not even be compared to the British and French forces. It was emphasized that the French mission was inadequate in terms of training and discipline and that strict measures were necessary in this regard. It was pointed out that if the problems in the Greek army were not resolved immediately, there was a high probability of failure in future operations. Of the 15,000 Greek troops that had moved to the Thessaloniki region, 6000 had fled. It was stated that the current

⁷ TNA, CAB 25/28/26.

⁸ TNA, CAB 25/28/21.

⁹ TNA, CAB 25/28/27.

¹⁰ TNA, CAB 25/28/28.

Greek General Staff was also inadequate and inexperienced. Experienced officers in the Greek army were removed from their posts after King Constantine was deposed¹¹. There were concerns regarding the coordination and logistical framework of the Greek military. Consequently, British authorities suggested that further modernization was necessary to ensure Greece was adequately prepared for future developments.

After this, the process of signing treaties between the victorious and defeated states began in order to definitively end the war. Within this framework, the Paris Peace Conference was held on 18 January 1919, with 32 different states participating. About fifteen days after the start of the Paris Peace Conference, Greek Prime Minister Venizelos traveled to Paris. Venizelos presented the Greek arguments regarding Anatolia in order to convince the Allied Powers at the Paris Peace Conference. Venizelos claimed that the Greek population in Western Anatolia outnumbered the Turkish population and stated that this region should be given to Greece. He also emphasized that Greeks lived in Istanbul, Thrace, and Cyprus, and that these regions, as well as Western Anatolia, should be incorporated into Greek territory. The major powers had differing approaches to the demands put forward by Venizelos. The Italian delegation was displeased with Greece's insistence on reclaiming territories that had been promised to Italy during the First World War. Britain and France wanted to see a state under their control, namely Greece, rather than a powerful Italian state in Western Anatolia. Throughout the conference, Venizelos argued that the Greeks in Izmir were being persecuted and that Greece should be allowed to occupy Izmir¹². Besides, at the Paris Peace Conference, Venizelos insisted that the Greek army should enter Istanbul¹³.

The U.S. opposed Greece's decision to invade Anatolia. According to the Americans, this decision was not based on any urgent political or military necessity, but was seen as the result of Venizelos' diplomatic efforts. The Italians, anticipating such a decision at the conference, launched military operations primarily in Adalia (Antalya) and other coastal areas, and sent troops to Konya. Before the occupation of Izmir, there was a serious threat of epidemic in the provinces of Izmir and Aydın. In addition to the conflicts between Turks and Greeks in the region, there was a power struggle between Italy, France, and

¹¹ TNA, CAB 25/28/55.

¹² D. USLU, *Paris Barış Konferansı'ndaki Yunan İsteklerinin Batı Basınına Yansımaları* in «History Studies: International Journal of History», Vol. 4, No. 2, 2012, pp. 362–368.

¹³ BAŞBAKANLIK OSMANLI Arşivi (hereafter BOA), DH. KMS., 49–104, 11 March 1919.

Greece¹⁴. E. H. Freshfield, an Englishman who owned real estate in the coastal area of Izmir that had been passed down to him from his grandfather and who stated that he was among the important landowners in Izmir, prepared a report on Izmir on 3 March 1919, and sent it to the British Foreign Office. According to the report, the proposal by the Allied Powers to give Izmir to Greece or Italy was met with concern by the people of Izmir. Trade in Izmir was shaped mainly by agricultural activities carried out in the interior. Almost all those engaged in agriculture were Muslims. According to Freshfield, Greece and Italy faced significant structural complexities that led their leadership to prioritize domestic stability and national economic policy over broader regional roles. For Izmir or the surrounding cities to be managed by the Greeks or Italians, a large number of bureaucrats would need to be sent to the region. However, this situation would lead to the two countries mentioned above having to borrow money in some way. Considering the inadequacy of the current Greek population engaged in agriculture in Greece, agricultural production would be disrupted following Greece's occupation of Western Anatolia due to the migration of Muslim Turks working in the agricultural sector in the region. It is foreseeable that the Greeks living in the region will eventually be able to carry out activities in agricultural areas, but this will take a long time¹⁵. A number of field reports sent to Britain offered critical assessments of the occupation and raised concerns regarding its potential long-term consequences.

Lieutenant Langdon Rees, stationed in Izmir, stated in a report sent to Cecil Harmsworth, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on 27 February 1919, prior to the occupation of Izmir, that although his grandparents were born in Britain, they had been residing in Izmir for many years and that his father owned a shipping company in Izmir. Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Europeans live in Izmir and its surroundings. The vast majority of Europeans are Levantines. Levantines have lived in these lands for several generations and do not maintain full ties with their home countries. The majority of the population in the province of Aydın is Turkish, and as one moves inland from the coast, the number of Greeks becomes a minority. According to American archival documents, the Greek population in Aydın has never exceeded one-third or one-fourth of the total population, and the majority in this region

¹⁴ British Library (hereafter BL): India Office Records and Private Papers (hereafter IORPP) Mss Eur F112/278/31-34.

¹⁵ TNA, Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 608/103/4-7. From E. H. Freshfield to the British Foreign Office, 3 March 1919.

has always been Muslim. While Greece maintained claims over Izmir and its environs, many observers noted that Allied support for such a move presented significant strategic complexities that required careful consideration. Considering the Turkish people's hostility towards the Greeks, it is clear that the idea of the region being governed by Greece would have very painful consequences. If this situation were to occur, the region would be constantly plagued by internal turmoil. Since there had been no previous colonial experience in Anatolia, it was generally predicted that the people of the region would not accept this situation. For these reasons, the report stated that Anatolia should be controlled by Britain, France, the U.S., or two or all of these powers, and that a system of administration similar to that of Egypt could be adopted¹⁶. British intelligence reports from the period often highlighted inconsistencies in Venizelos' demographic figures, suggesting that the data presented at the Paris Peace Conference was viewed with skepticism by certain Allied observers on the ground.

According to another report written by a British official serving in Izmir and its surroundings, it was pointed out that the Greek population in Izmir did not exceed one-third and that Turks constituted the majority in Izmir. It was emphasized that Turks dominated the agricultural sector and that industrial companies were mostly British or French. It was also stated that the Greeks were not involved in any significant industrial activity apart from a few flour mills. It was noted that establishing control in Anatolia would involve a large-scale military commitment, raising questions about the sustainability of the administrative and security efforts required for such a transition¹⁷. Official reports from the Allied administration in Izmir offered a different perspective on the region's demographics. These assessments suggested that the Greek population was not as extensive as previously estimated, which posed a significant challenge to the feasibility of establishing a stable administration in the area.

During a period when Greece's preparations for Anatolia were ongoing, the Allied Powers argued that the Turks' apprehension about the situation should not be ignored. For this reason, it was stated that an announcement would be made to the people of Izmir that the Greeks would not intervene in the region. According to intelligence information obtained, Italian agents were cooperating with the Turks against the Greeks¹⁸. While these developments were taking

¹⁶ TNA, FO 608/103/10-14. From Lieutenant Langdon Rees to Cecil Harmsworth, 27 February 1919; The National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), 867.00/865, 20 March 1919.

¹⁷ TNA, FO 608/103/39-41, 14 February 1919.

¹⁸ TNA, FO 608/103/73-74, March 1919.

place in Anatolia, Venizelos argued at the Paris Peace Conference that Greece should intervene in Izmir as soon as possible. Venizelos pointed out that tensions were rising in Izmir and that the Allied Powers should intervene in the situation¹⁹. While the Paris Peace Conference was ongoing, Greek gangs were arming themselves in different parts of Anatolia and increasing their pressure on the local population. Greek gangs attacked the Turkish Gendarmerie station in the village of Akköy, near Söke, killing all the soldiers. Only 10 soldiers managed to escape the attack. Greek authorities encouraged and supported the activities of these gangs. For example, the murderer of police officer Hamza Efendi, who was killed while on duty, was put on a ship wearing a Greek uniform and taken to Greece²⁰. Prior to the occupation, various diplomatic and local maneuvers were observed that contributed to heightened regional tensions. Concurrently, the Allied Powers issued assurances that Izmir would not be occupied, a move interpreted by some as a strategic effort to discourage Turkish mobilization and resistance.

The Greek warship *Averoff* arrived in Izmir on 16 April 1919. With the ship's arrival, the Greeks in Izmir were celebrating. Following this development, Turkish officials were quite disturbed, and the number of police patrolling around the Government building was increased. Furthermore, although Easter passed without incident, Greek scout groups marched through the streets of Izmir, even though the Allied Powers had previously issued a declaration that such parades would not be allowed. In the following days, some Greek gangs dressed in Turkish military uniforms entered the village of Kayas on the Izmir-Aydın railway line and cut the telegraph line there. During the course of these military operations, there were reported incidents involving the civilian population, including the loss of property and personal safety in certain Muslim villages²¹. In a telegram sent by E. Venizelos to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 23 April 1919, regarding the military occupation of Izmir, it was stated that preparations for the occupation of Izmir should be completed in accordance with the decision taken by the leaders of the Allied Powers, because the Italians could occupy Bodrum after Marmaris. It was emphasized that it was important for the operation to be carried out secretly and that, for this

¹⁹ TNA, FO 608/103/119-120, 13 March 1919.

²⁰ TNA, FO 608/103/139, 4 April 1919.

²¹ TNA, FO 608/103/198, From Representative of British High Commissioner (James Morgan) Smyrna and Aidin Vilayet to British High Commissioner Constantinople, 24 April 1919.

reason, the Turks should not be aware of the situation when Greek soldiers landed in Izmir²². As Greece's territorial interests regarding Izmir became more pronounced, Ottoman officials engaged in diplomatic consultations with the Allied Powers. Within this context, they sought to address the presence of the Greek Red Cross, citing concerns over the scope of its activities relative to its humanitarian mandate²³.

In a report written on 14 April 1921, detailing his observations in Izmir, Italian diplomat Luigi Villari, who served in the League of Nations, stated that Venizelos' claim at the Paris Peace Conference that Greeks in Izmir were at risk of mass slaughter by Turks did not reflect the truth. Accordingly, it was determined that the leaflets allegedly prepared and distributed by some Turkish gendarmerie officers in Izmir, calling on the Muslim population to kill Greeks, had been produced by Greek authorities and sent to the Peace Conference. Subsequently, the commission of inquiry in Izmir determined that the circulated leaflets lacked authenticity. In fact, there was no evidence at the time that the Christian population in Izmir was at risk of any massacre. After the Italian delegates left Paris in May 1919, Venizelos was left alone with the British, French, and American delegates. During these talks, Venizelos succeeded in convincing the great powers to occupy Izmir²⁴.

According to both British field reports and local Ottoman administrative records, the activities of Greek paramilitary groups in the pre-occupation phase were perceived as a catalyst for escalating regional instability. Also, during this period, the Patriarchate in Istanbul supported the Greek arguments and carried out intensive propaganda activities. Ultimately, as a result of negotiations between the Allied Powers and Greece at the conference, a decision was made for Greece to occupy Izmir²⁵. British Prime Minister Lloyd George and Greek Prime Minister Venizelos insisted on the landing of Greek troops in Izmir²⁶.

²² Benaki Museum (hereafter BM), Eleftherios Venizelos Archive (hereafter EVA), 017-37, 23 April 1919.

²³ BOA, DH. ŞFR., 616-88, 21 April 1919.

²⁴ League of Nations Archives (LoN hereafter), 11/12236/1696, 14 April 1921.

²⁵ A. ÖZGÖREN, *Paris'te Yunan Propagandası 1919–1920* in «Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi», Vol. 8, No. 15, 2022, p. 372.

²⁶ M. LLEWELLYN-SMITH, *The historiography of the Greek-Turkish War in Asia Minor: Britain, Greece, and others, 1915–1923* in «Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies», Vol. 47, No. 2, 2023, p. 275.

2. *The Greeks' invasion of Anatolia*

Greek forces, backed by the support of the Allied Powers, landed in Izmir on 15 May 1919. Despite orders for Greek soldiers not to approach Turkish barracks, the Greeks disregarded these orders, attacking the Turkish barracks and the Government House, and arresting 300 Turks. A significant number of detainees were reportedly killed during the chaotic early phase of the occupation, according to British, Ottoman, and international observer accounts. The Governor of Izmir and other Turkish officials were subjected to severe humiliation when they were arrested by Greek soldiers. According to James Morgan, Britain's representative in the region, 300 Turks and 100 Greeks lost their lives in the clashes between Turks and Greeks²⁷. The report prepared by Mr. Stergiadis, the Greek High Commissioner in Izmir, emphasized that a total of 163 people lost their lives when Greek soldiers entered Izmir. It was stated that during the ensuing chaos, some people were thrown into the sea by both the Greeks and the Turks, and these people drowned²⁸. Italian diplomat Luigi Villari, in a report detailing his observations in Izmir, noted that neither Turkish officials nor the public offered any resistance during the initial stages of the occupation of Izmir. There was no evidence of any organized resistance against the Greek landing forces. However, the actions of the local Greek population and clergy during the landing contributed to significant communal friction regarding the religious sensibilities of the Muslims. Subsequently, clashes broke out between Turks and Greeks. According to this report, as a result of the clashes, 20 Greek civilians lost their lives, while between 300 and 400 Turkish civilians lost their lives²⁹.

The Turkish population, which constituted 80% of Western Anatolia, opposed foreign intervention³⁰. Turkish newspapers, in their publications following the occupation of Izmir, emphasized that Izmir was an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and that Anatolia had no historical connection with Greece. They stated that the Turkish population in Izmir was 83% and stressed that the Greek occupation would not be permanent³¹. Due to the advance of the Greek occupation, the Ottoman Empire was taking the necessary steps to halt the occupation³². The Allies viewed the occupation of Izmir by Greece

²⁷ BL, IORPP Mss Eur F112/278/49.

²⁸ BM, EVA, 018-153, 26 May 1919.

²⁹ LoN, 11/12236/1696, 14 April 1921.

³⁰ TNA, FO 608/103/174, 15 May 1919.

³¹ BM, EVA, 018-85, 19 May 1919.

³² BOA, DH. ŞFR., 99-297, 23 May 1919.

favorably because they believed it would enable them to get the Turkish side to accept their demands³³. Ultimately, the occupation of Izmir deeply shook Muslims in Turkey and plunged them into a pessimistic mood³⁴.

The Italians also occupied the Adalia region and advanced into the interior. Italy and Greece faced each other on the Izmir-Aydın railway line. The Italians objected to this line being under Greek control, and a minor clash occurred between the two states northeast of Söke. However, before the incident escalated, it ended with the Greek commanders evacuating the region in favor of the Italians³⁵. Just as the Turks opposed the Greeks setting foot in Izmir, they were equally opposed to the Italians' occupation activities. During this period, the Turkish people were furious about the occupations, and British officers received numerous letters protesting the occupations³⁶. Greek commander Colonel Zafiriou, who served during the occupation, stated that he had landed in Izmir in coordination with the Allies and that this landing had been carried out for the safety of the people in the region. Colonel Zafiriou emphasized that the Greek headquarters was open to all and that everyone's demands would be carefully considered³⁷. In a telegram sent on 19 May 1919, to L. Paraskevopoulos, another commander responsible for the occupation of Izmir, E. Venizelos stated that Greek troops should behave like true Greek soldiers toward unarmed Turkish civilians³⁸. The tactical maneuvers of the Greek command often appeared to present the Allies with a *fait accompli*, reflecting a strategic determination to expand the occupation despite diplomatic constraints.

Looking at the report dated 31 May 1919, by Kemal Bey, the District Governor of Menemen, describing developments in the region, it is evident that the problems that began with the occupation of Izmir increased day by day. Numerous reports were submitted to the Greek military and civil leadership regarding alleged operational irregularities, though these representations did not result in formal administrative resolution. It is noted that Greek military personnel, tasked with regional security, disregarded cultural sensitivities regarding the traditional attire of Muslim women. Additionally, disciplinary

³³ LoN, S397/62/3, 4 February 1920.

³⁴ NARA, 867.00/878, 20 May 1919.

³⁵ BL, IOR: Library/Political and Secret Department (hereafter L/P.S)/11/146/350/19, 18 June 1919.

³⁶ BL, IOR: L/P.S/11/146/1095, 21 May 1919.

³⁷ TNA, Admiralty (hereafter ADM) 137/1768/203, 20 May 1919.

³⁸ BM, EVA, 018-79, 19 May 1919.

lapses involving local elements led to disturbances within Muslim neighborhoods, affecting the overall stability of the area³⁹. After the occupation of Izmir, the Greeks experienced great difficulties in governing the region. For example, with the forced migration of Turks from Izmir, there was almost no population left to engage in agriculture. This led to a marked decrease in agricultural output. The new administrative authorities found it challenging to implement solutions for the escalating food crisis amidst the prevailing regional instability. In addition, the Greek administration armed the Greeks in Izmir and its surroundings and employed them in the Greek army. This situation was contrary to international law and was likely to cause greater tensions in the region. British officials serving in the region argued that peace could not be established in the region under Greek rule and that a commission established by the Allied Powers should therefore be tasked with this responsibility⁴⁰. Many of the issues emphasized by British officials before the war began to emerge with the start of the occupation.

The Greek administration was attempting to continue the occupation of Izmir by operating through associations. As a result of its investigation, the Ottoman police determined that the Pan-Hellenic association «Kordros», based in Athens and under the protection of the Greek Government, was actively working to incite rebellion and unrest within the Ottoman Empire. This association, which had thousands of members, issued photo ID cards to its members who came to the fore after the occupation of Izmir, with the aim of showing them that they were superior to other members. One of these ID cards fell into the hands of the police. Four to five months before the occupation of Izmir, the Kordros association, under the auspices of the Red Cross, shipped weapons to the region for use by Greek troops. Furthermore, the unrest and chaos created by thousands of Kordros members in the region accelerated the occupation of Izmir. According to Ottoman police investigations and subsequent Allied reports, members of the Kordros association reportedly collaborated with Greek military units during the initial phase of the occupation. These disturbances were associated with a notable impact on the Muslim civilian population in the region⁴¹.

Greece was acting with the desire to expand its occupation of Izmir, but Britain believed that Greece needed to be restrained at this stage. British Foreign

³⁹ TNA, FO 286/714/359/24, 31 May 1919.

⁴⁰ TNA, FO 608/103/282, From General Milne (Constantinople) to British War Office, 11 August 1919.

⁴¹ TNA, FO 286/714/359/28, 27 June 1919.

Secretary Arthur Balfour met with Greek Prime Minister Venizelos in July 1919 to discuss this issue. Mr. Balfour argued that Greece's occupation attempts outside Izmir should be ended immediately. Venizelos admitted that they were not acting according to instructions but claimed that they had been forced to expand the occupation due to the difficulty of communication between Paris and Izmir and the prevailing uncertainty. Venizelos emphasized that their advance towards the Menderes region was carried out with the aim of preventing the Italians from moving. He stated that Greece needed to expand the occupation towards the Edremit, Soma, Akhisar, and Salihli regions, thereby preventing the Turks from benefiting from the railway network⁴². This tactic of expansion by the Greek army, which was carried out in a *fait accompli* manner, was viewed by the Allied Powers as insincere. Greek political and military authorities ignored the orders they had been given and engaged in operational activities. Subsequently, they presented various excuses to the Allied Powers, citing misunderstandings. The months of June and July were generally marked by clashes between Greek advances and the Turkish resistance movement, the «*Kuva-yı Milliye*», which opposed them. The clashes intensified as the Greeks provoked the Turks. For example, two-thirds of Aydın was destroyed. As a result of the clashes in the region, between two and three thousand Turks lost their lives and more than 25,000 Turks became refugees⁴³. Meanwhile, the Italians and Greeks faced each other again on 27 June 1919. While the Italian army continued its advance in Anatolia, it came under attack from machine guns fired by Greek aircraft. Italy issued a strong protest to Greece over this incident⁴⁴. The Greeks foresaw that the prolonged occupation of Anatolia would present them with many difficulties, both politically and militarily, and therefore ignored the instructions of the Allied Powers and embarked on decisive actions.

The Greek administration wanted to expand the occupation, but Greek soldiers were involved in numerous incidents resulting in deaths or injuries in the region. Numerous reports from the region describe incidents of violence, arson, and forced displacement involving Greek soldiers and irregular armed groups operating alongside them. After three days of intense clashes between the Muslim population and the Greeks in Aydın, Greek forces withdrew from Aydın on 30 June 1919. The Greek soldiers who withdrew from Aydın destroyed the region. Turks who were forced to leave the region migrated

⁴² TNA, FO 286/714/359/43, 12 July 1919.

⁴³ TNA, FO 608/103/450, 23 September 1919.

⁴⁴ BM, EVA, 020-99, 27 June 1919.

towards the interior⁴⁵. While these events were unfolding, the Greek commander Paraskevopoulos and his military entourage were in Aydın⁴⁶.

In this context, the Turk refugees had begun moving towards Bandırma and Bursa. Most of the refugees were sleeping in mosques, madrasas, and train stations⁴⁷. A. Stergiadis claimed that the situation of the Turkish refugee population resulting from the military operation in Aydın had been exaggerated. A. Stergiadis cited as evidence the statement by Rev. Robert Frew, who was active in the region on behalf of the British Red Cross Society, that the reports published on the number of Turkish refugees did not largely reflect the truth⁴⁸.

As Greek soldiers evacuated Aydın, they set fire to Turkish neighborhoods. They also targeted Turks trying to leave the region with machine guns⁴⁹. The attacks by Greek soldiers continued unabated. According to a report prepared by British representative James Morgan on 4 July 1919, as relayed by a Turkish doctor, a Muslim prisoner in Aydın was severely beaten by Greek guards. American Consul General Mr. Horton also investigated whether this incident was true and confirmed that it was. This was not an isolated incident; on the contrary, it was determined that other Turkish wounded who were being treated had also been severely beaten by the Greeks⁵⁰. Greek soldiers who raided the Turkish Gendarmerie station in Tire, Aydın, in July 1919 seized the weapons of approximately 60 Gendarmerie soldiers. Furthermore, the Greeks carried out intense attacks on Muslim villages. The Turkish side, in response to these attacks, formed resistance organizations⁵¹.

The Greek administration seized the Ottoman bank in Izmir, and subsequently, the Greek High Commissioner in Izmir, Mr. Stergiadis, arrived at the bank on 31 July 1919, and announced that the Ottoman Government must hand over the bank accounts to him personally. He also demanded the funds obtained from customs duties. Greek units assumed control of the financial institution, resulting in the removal of customers and the subsequent suspension of public entry into the building⁵². The Greeks continued to borrow from

⁴⁵ TNA, FO 286/714/359, 10 July 1919; TNA, FO, 286/714/2887/2552, 7 July 1919.

⁴⁶ BOA, DH.KMS., 52-33, 13 July 1919.

⁴⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ., 14-120, 9 July 1919.

⁴⁸ BM, EVA, 026-14/15, 18 January 1920.

⁴⁹ TNA, FO 608/103/451, 23 September 1919.

⁵⁰ TNA, FO 286/714/1222/M/1913, From Representative of British High Commissioner Smyrna and Aidin Vilayet to British High Commissioner Constantinople, 4 July 1919.

⁵¹ TNA, FO 608/103/344A, 4 October 1919.

⁵² TNA, FO 608/103/296, 18 August 1919.

the Allied Powers because they were in a difficult economic situation. France made payments to the National Bank of Greece on 24 September 1919, in the amount of 300,000 francs, on 26 September 1919, in the amount of 1,000,000 francs, and finally on 30 September 1919, in the amount of 1,000,000 francs⁵³. At this point, the Athens Chamber of Commerce expressed that the Greek government needed to take certain measures to prevent the Greek currency from losing value. It was stated that many Greek traders had moved their investments abroad with the outbreak of war⁵⁴. These developments raised questions as to whether the occupation was temporary or permanent. However, the Greeks were taking steps to make the occupation permanent. British officials agreed that Greece's stance would further destabilize the region. Ultimately, it was clear that these steps, which seriously restricted Turkey's independence, would be met with resistance. There were differing views on whether the resistance movement against the Greek occupation, known as the Mustafa Kemal resistance, was gaining or losing strength. This movement emphasized Islamic sensibilities in order to gain the support of the Turkish people⁵⁵. Another important factor was the increase in anti-British sentiment in the areas occupied by the Greeks. It is known that the National Struggle against the Greeks joined forces with resistance forces in the interior. Turkish resistance fighters in the western provinces believed that Britain openly supported the Greeks and condoned their excesses. The tragic events that occurred with the occupation of Izmir and its surroundings by Greece led to the revival of the Committee of Union and Progress and the emergence of the National Struggle movement⁵⁶. American eyewitnesses stated that the influence of Turkish resistance fighters spread everywhere and that the word "revolution" began to be used very frequently. Turkish resistance fighters declared that they would continue to fight until Greek troops withdrew from Anatolia⁵⁷. The Turkish resistance formed against the Greek occupation did not distinguish between the attitudes of the Allied Powers and Greece, stating that both were responsible. British officials, however, predicted that negative consequences were inevitable because Greece could not be brought under control.

Turks fleeing the Greek occupation had become refugees, and with the arrival of winter, the question of where to settle these people came to the fore.

⁵³ BM, EVA, 055-23, 21 December 1919.

⁵⁴ BM, EVA, 024-202, 19 November 1919.

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM 137/1768/234-235, 5 January 1920.

⁵⁶ BL, IOR: L/P.S/11/160/54972/M.E.44, 12 November 1919.

⁵⁷ NARA, 867.00/916, 28 August 1919.

Unfortunately, reports indicate that mortality rates were high among these homeless people. It was known that the Turkish government could not provide adequate assistance and shelter for the refugees. Since it was unknown how long the Greeks would occupy the region, it seemed impossible at this stage for the refugees to return to their homes⁵⁸. British military observers noted that the Greek army's rapid advance created significant logistical challenges and led to reported grievances among the local population, a situation documented by both Allied monitoring commissions and local Turkish authorities.

M. René Puaux, foreign news correspondent for the *Temps* newspaper, was one of the first French civilians to set foot in Izmir. M. R. Puaux claimed that the country was heading towards a dangerous period due to the postponement of the Paris Peace Conference's decisions regarding Anatolia. According to M. R. Puaux, because Anatolia was historically and ethnically Greek, the Greeks were the people most deserving of support in the region. He emphasized that the Greeks should live in prosperity and peace because of their success in trade. Mr. Puaux claimed that the Turks had a hostile attitude and that wherever Turkish rule existed, there would always be oppressed people. It was stated that the real danger in Anatolia was Kemal Pasha's Pan-Islamist policies. Mr. Puaux pointed out that the movement formed by Turkish nationalists did not pose a serious threat and that their ammunition was very limited, while the Greek side was militarily superior⁵⁹. The nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal presented a fragmented picture. However, due to disagreements among the Allied Powers, the Turkish side was able to gain opportunities on the front lines⁶⁰. Meanwhile, Venizelos, taking Lord Allenby's swift and sudden victory over the Ottoman army as an example, believed that the Greek army would similarly neutralize Turkish forces in a short time⁶¹.

The observations of British Naval Captain H. C. Luke regarding the occupation are quite striking. According to him, the Allied Powers were not at all pleased with the military and political stance of the Greeks in Anatolia. Greek High Commissioner Mr. Stergiadis was aware that the occupation of Anatolia had negatively affected Greece's prestige. Greek authorities, including Mr. Stergiadis, conceded that there were notable instances of irregularities regarding the behavior of personnel during the period of administration. It is clear that the goal declared by the Greeks when they occupied the region, namely

⁵⁸ BL, IOR: L/P.S/11/160/2082, 21 November 1919.

⁵⁹ LoN, S394/59/1, 4 December 1919.

⁶⁰ LoN, S397/62/3, 6 November 1919.

⁶¹ LoN, S397/62/4, 12 March 1920.

to bring peace to the country, was not achieved; in fact, the opposite result was faced. Before the Greek occupation began, Turks and Greeks in the Aydın Province lived in relative harmony. However, under the current circumstances, it seems impossible for things to return to the way they were, and the situation is deteriorating further. As long as Greek troops remain in Anatolia, tensions between Turks and Greeks will continue to escalate. It will be extremely difficult for the two people to live together again. Since the Turkish population outnumbers the Greeks in Western Anatolia, it will be extremely costly for the Greek administration to maintain control over these regions. It is clear that permanent Greek rule over Turkish lands is impossible. The growing resistance among Turks demonstrates that these lands are too valuable to be surrendered to the Greeks. Furthermore, the assumption that all Greeks who were subjects of the Ottoman Empire supported the Greek occupation does not correspond to reality⁶². The Jews living in Izmir preferred a British-French joint administration model over Greek rule in the region and were particularly concerned that their economic interests would suffer⁶³. These findings are similar to the impressions previously made by Allied officials in the field. Although military officials impartially conveyed the reality on the ground to politicians, ultimately, it was a period in which political actors were more influential.

3. *The prolongation of Greece's adventure in Anatolia and the loss of the war*

Greece's inability to fully establish control in Anatolia led to strong voices against Greece in the international community. Faced with pressure, the Greek administration attempted to declare the independence of the Izmir region. Claiming that this decision for independence was the result of the will of the people, it sought to demonstrate that Greece had no intention of establishing any domination over Izmir⁶⁴. At the same time, Britain was attempting to increase its activities in the Marmara region in April 1920. By 1920, Yalova, Gemlik, Orhangazi, Izmit, and other settlements in the Marmara region under British control had been handed over to the Greek administration⁶⁵. Following the establishment of security in Gemlik and its environs, the British forces transferred complete control of the region to the Greeks. Initially, the local

⁶² TNA, FO 608/103/453-455, 23 September 1919.

⁶³ BM, EVA, 019-126, 13 June 1919.

⁶⁴ TNA, ADM 137/1768/238, 8 January 1920.

⁶⁵ Y. DİNÇEL, *Greek Occupation of Western Anatolia according to Archival Documents* in «Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi», No. 39, 2023, p. 1213.

residents met the basic needs of the Greek troops, such as firewood and water. However, the situation shifted upon the arrival of a new Greek commander, who prohibited anyone from leaving the village. During the search for weaponry, those found with firearms were reportedly subjected to harsh measures that exceeded standard military protocols⁶⁶.

The report written by Patrick Slade, who served in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, during his visit to the Marmara region is noteworthy. It states that participation in the Turkish resistance around Iznik continues to increase and that the people are providing material support. Adapazarı, which is part of Izmit, is considered the center of the nationalist movement. Kuşçuzade Eşref Bey, who was exiled to Malta but later released, is attempting to organize the local population. There is an arrest warrant out for Kuşçuzade Eşref Bey, and he is staying at the home of Sırrı Bey, the representative of Adapazarı. On 3 April 1920, Eşref Bey arrived in Adapazarı with 300 mounted infantrymen and set out for Derbend, east of Izmit, with 50 mounted infantrymen on 4 April⁶⁷. Besides, in Izmit, a group of Greek army personnel, both land and sea soldiers, accompanied by local Greeks, went to the Greek monastery. During their march, this group chanted slogans in line with Greek ideals but dispersed peacefully⁶⁸.

The Turkish side had stepped up its preparations to halt the advance of Britain and Greece. Meanwhile, Britain was instigating uprisings against the National Forces through figures such as Ahmed Anzavur to disrupt the activities of the Turkish resistance movement. However, while providing this support, military staff in Britain emphasized that movements such as Anzavur's could not be trusted, and that the risk existed that the weapons and ammunition supplied to similar groups could later be used against the Allies⁶⁹. Meanwhile, following the closure of the Ottoman Parliament in Istanbul, the National Struggle cadre led by Mustafa Kemal opened the Grand National Assembly in Ankara on 23 April 1920⁷⁰.

In May 1920, Mustafa Kemal, speaking as President of the National Assembly, gave an interview to the Bursa-based newspaper «Millet Yolu», stating that the occupation of Istanbul, the seat of the Caliphate, by the Allied Powers was an act contrary to justice and rights. Following both the occupations in

⁶⁶ NARA, 767.6/8116/7, 18 October 1920.

⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/5047/130-134, 12 April 1920.

⁶⁸ BOA, DH.EUM.6.Şb, 53-74, 2 November 1920.

⁶⁹ TNA, FO 371/5048/38, May 1920.

⁷⁰ İ. ENGİNÜN, *Birinci Türkiye Millet Meclisi'nin Açılışı ve Yazarlarımız* in «Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi», Vol. II, No. 6, 1986, p. 733.

Anatolia and the occupation of Istanbul, the Turkish people are fighting to defend the rights of the Caliphate and national independence. Greek attacks have been repelled in Aydın, and this region can now be considered secure. The attacks by the Anzavur movement are entirely aimed at assisting the Greeks. Serving Greek interests is tantamount to actual treason. The national struggle will not be hindered by the activities of such elements. Criminals will be brought to justice sooner or later⁷¹. During this period, the National Struggle had to deal with many problems both internally and externally.

Greece was unable to advance as it wished in its occupation of Western Anatolia. For this reason, Venizelos aimed to distract the Turkish side by launching a military occupation on the Eastern Thrace front. However, the British General Staff considered Venizelos' move to be extremely hasty and ill-considered. Britain primarily hoped that the occupation of Western Anatolia would be successful. Furthermore, it was unclear what Mustafa Kemal's next step would be and what additional forces he would use. It was also impossible to predict exactly how the Turkish people would resist the Greek occupation in the future. In Britain's view, in an environment of such uncertainty, it was not at all wise to reduce the number of Greek forces in Anatolia and transfer them to the Thrace region⁷². At this point, the ongoing operations between Greek forces and Turkish resistance fighters led to a growing dissatisfaction from France and Italy, whose opposition to the Greek cause increased progressively⁷³. In a telegram sent on 12 October 1920 to Dimitrios Kaklamanos, who was serving as the Greek Delegate to the Council of the League of Nations, Venizelos indicated that Greek troops would land in Ankara within a month and that they would also carry out a military occupation in the Pontus region within the same period. Venizelos strongly emphasized that Britain should provide Greece with military equipment support as well as an average monthly support of 3,500,000 pounds. He also stated that it was essential to supply 200,000 woolen pants and lined boots due to the approaching winter⁷⁴. The British, who instrumentalized the Greeks for their own political objectives, occasionally maintained an indifferent stance toward Greece's military operations in Anatolia⁷⁵.

⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/5048/72-73, May 1920.

⁷² TNA, ADM 137/1768/246-247, 8 July 1920.

⁷³ NARA, 767.68/56, 8 September 1920.

⁷⁴ BM, EVA, 059-43/44, 12 October 1920.

⁷⁵ NARA, 767.68/56, 8 September 1920.

Amidst all these military developments, on 14 November 1920, Venizelos lost the elections in Greece, and a united opposition supporting King Constantine came to power. The new government, led by Demetrius Rallis, had no intention of withdrawing from Anatolia or ending the occupation⁷⁶. After the election, pro-royalist soldiers staged a demonstration in Izmir. In addition, 300 prisoners of war attempted to escape from prison but were unsuccessful⁷⁷. After Venizelos suffered a heavy election defeat, France began to refuse to consider Greece as an ally⁷⁸. The Greek army's reserves of weapons and ammunition were extremely inadequate, and France, seeking to remedy the deficiencies in the army's artillery equipment, observed that Greece was quite unsuccessful logistically⁷⁹. Furthermore, organizational cohesion within the Greek military had significantly diminished, leading to widespread disciplinary challenges. These systemic internal issues were observed and formally acknowledged by Greek administrative officials. For example, 3rd Regiment Commander Kon-dylis was attacked by Greek soldiers in Salihli and survived by hiding under the coal compartment of a train⁸⁰.

A British intelligence officer's report on his impressions after visiting the Karamürsel region of Izmit is significant in terms of revealing the extent of the Greek occupation. According to the report, the shops in Karamürsel were completely empty and all goods had been looted. The people were in a state of panic and stated that Greek soldiers had stolen all their animals and taken them away. It was noted that urgent aid was needed in the region, otherwise, people would starve to death. There had been fierce clashes between the Nationalists and the Greeks, and the Greeks had brought additional reinforcements to the region. Greek soldiers arrested 14 Turks and executed them on the coast⁸¹. Clashes between Turkish resistance forces and the Greek army continued throughout 1919 and 1920. The Greeks' use of harsh methods during the occupation led to the strengthening of Turkish resistance⁸².

⁷⁶ K. TRAVLOS, *The Transition: Change and Continuity in the Greek War Effort, November-December 1920* in «Turkish Journal of War Studies», Vol. 6, No.1, 2025, p. 2.

⁷⁷ TNA, ADM 137/1768/264, 21 November 1920.

⁷⁸ A. L. MACFIE, *British Foreign Policy in the Near East, 1916–1922: Questions of Responsibility* in «Balkan Studies», Vol. 40, No. 2, 1999, p. 333.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM 137/1768/268, 22 November 1920.

⁸⁰ TNA, ADM 137/1768/271, 22 November 1920.

⁸¹ TNA, FO 286/759/11, November 1920.

⁸² D. PIZZO, *Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922)*, The Encyclopedia of War, 2011, p. 2.

Greece was eager to attack the Turks in order to make progress in its invasion of Anatolia. On 6 January 1921, the Greeks clashed with Turkish forces in the direction of Eskişehir. However, the Greeks were unable to achieve success against the Turks and were forced to retreat⁸³. Furthermore, problems arose between Greeks located in the Gebze region and the Turkish people. The main reason for this situation was that some Greek soldiers were engaging in disruptive behavior⁸⁴. Besides, the Greeks, not taking this defeat too seriously, launched an offensive operation on two fronts on 23 March 1921. While Greek troops advanced along the southern front in the direction of Uşak-Afyonkarahisar, they moved from the direction of Bursa along the northern front. However, the Greek forces on the northern front encountered effective Turkish resistance. The intelligence information obtained by the Greek General Staff about the Turkish forces did not reflect the reality⁸⁵. The Greek side was forced to end the operation to avoid heavy losses⁸⁶. Greece was aware of the differences of opinion among the Allies. Furthermore, Greek officials felt they had been left alone in their operations in Anatolia. In a telegram sent by Greece's Ambassador to Paris, G. Baltazis, to Greek Prime Minister N. Kalogeropoulos on 18 February 1921, it was pointed out that France was trying to prevent Greece's military operations in Anatolia and was fighting to prevent the advance of Hellenism in the East⁸⁷. It is also worth mentioning the views of Britain on the Greek occupation of Anatolia. British Prime Minister Lloyd George stated that Greece's advance in Anatolia should not be seen solely as a result of the Greek army's determination and sacrifice. According to him, Greece's expansion was mainly due to the enormous struggle waged by the Allies, and especially Britain, against Turkey. Britain supported Greece both militarily and financially⁸⁸.

The Allies, due to the successive defeats suffered by the Greeks, had begun to exert efforts to secure an agreement between the Greeks and the Turks. The Allies had put forward proposals for the withdrawal of Greek forces from Anatolia and for Izmir to be administered by a non-Greek Christian governor.

⁸³ P. K. JENSEN, *The Greco-Turkish War, 1920–1922* in «International Journal of Middle East Studies», Vol. 10, No. 4, 1979, p. 558.

⁸⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-14, 2 February 1921.

⁸⁵ M. LLEWELLYN-SMITH, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1973, p. 198.

⁸⁶ TNA, FO 371/6519/89, 23 June 1921.

⁸⁷ BM, EVA, 028-15, 18 February 1921.

⁸⁸ BM, EVA, 028-16, 19 February 1921.

British authorities grew skeptical of the Greek administration following reports regarding the treatment of the Turkish population in Anatolia, which raised concerns about regional stability and governance. However, the question of whether the Turkish side would accept the above-mentioned proposals was a matter of concern for the Allies. Furthermore, according to the British, these proposals could be perceived as a sign of weakness by the Turks and could increase their power. Britain feared losing its influence in both Anatolia and Greece⁸⁹. The Greek side did not welcome the proposal of the Allied Powers. The Greek Government stated that it recognized the desire of merchants and soldiers' families within Greece for the war to end, but emphasized that the war would continue until the national aspirations of the Greek people were fulfilled. Similarly, the Turkish side also stressed that it would remain in the struggle until the occupation ended⁹⁰. In June 1921, rumors spread that Russian mines and submarines would be given to the Turks and that the British navy would be under threat. The Greeks, meanwhile, exaggerated the support given to the Turks in an attempt to protect their own interests⁹¹.

The Director of the National Bank of Greece, M. S. Eulambio, stated in a report he wrote in 1921 that government expenditures were quite high due to the continuation of military operations in Asia Minor. However, M. S. Eulambio emphasized that Asia Minor was the homeland of the Greeks and that the operation should continue, while also highlighting that Greek had been spoken in the region since the time of Homer. According to Eulambio, the military struggle in Anatolia was a war of liberation for the Greeks. Anatolia is quite rich in minerals, metals, and precious metals. Furthermore, according to him, the land is fertile and all the facilities for livestock farming are well-developed⁹².

The Greek army was attempting to deepen its occupation in different regions of Anatolia. In this context, a Greek battalion numbering around 200 soldiers had first arrived in Ayvacık, near Çanakkale, on their way to Soma, near Manisa. Here, they forcibly took transport vehicles from the local population⁹³. On 9 July 1921, the Greek offensive began, and the Greek army took

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/6519/64-65, 22 June 1921.

⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/6519/161, 27 June 1921.

⁹¹ K. G. LAREW, *Great Britain and the Greco-Turkish War, 1912–1922* in «The Historian», Vol. 35, No. 2, 1973, p. 265.

⁹² LoN, 10/12733/10945, 18 May 1921.

⁹³ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-14, 19 July 1921.

control of the Eskişehir region. Subsequently, it continued its advance towards the Afyonkarahisar region and captured that area as well. The Turks, on the other hand, were forced to retreat northeast of Eskişehir in the face of the offensive. The morale of the Greek army had risen due to recent operations. It became apparent that the pro-royalist Greek army could be at least as successful as the Venizelist army members. However, the Greek army had not yet been able to completely neutralize the Turkish army. After both sides fortified their positions, they faced each other again. During the clashes that took place in the Battle of Sakarya between 23 August and 13 September 1921, the Turks stopped the Greek offensive. As the Greeks retreated, they destroyed all the railway lines along their route. The Greeks had retreated towards Eskişehir. British military officials expressed the view that it was now very difficult for the Greek army to achieve a decisive victory in Anatolia. Furthermore, the British General Staff stated that it would not be reasonable for the Greek army to continue the occupation and that negotiations with Mustafa Kemal should therefore begin immediately⁹⁴. After the Battle of Sakarya, the situation of the Greek army deteriorated further. For example, Greek soldiers were not being adequately fed⁹⁵.

Venizelos blamed the current Greek government for the defeats. According to Venizelos, Greece had been subjected to diplomatic isolation by the Allied Powers, making it impossible for Greece to achieve victory in Anatolia. At this point, the Greek government was wearing down the Greek people and opening the door to disaster⁹⁶. Greek Prime Minister Dimitrios Gounaris stated that the decisions regarding the Greek army's advance and retreat in Anatolia were made not only by the Greek government but also by consensus with the Allied Powers. He emphasized that Greece was acting under the orders of the Allied States⁹⁷. Despite Greece's failure to achieve military success in Anatolia, Greek Colonel Georges stated that Greece would advance towards Ankara if 3 or 4 regiments were reinforced. He emphasized that the Greek army was not experiencing any difficulties in terms of equipment or food supplies and that the 8 divisions in Anatolia were at full strength⁹⁸. Towards the end of the war,

⁹⁴ TNA, War Office (WO) 106/1438/1-26, November 1921.

⁹⁵ K. TRAVLOS, D. AKYÜZ and C. MERT-TRAVLOS, *Caricaturing the enemy: caricatures and the Greek-Turkish War 1919–1922* in «The European Journal of Humour Research», Vol. 10, No. 4, 2023, p. 76.

⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/6532/102-103, 3 October 1921.

⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/6532/146, 17 October 1921.

⁹⁸ BM, EVA, 028-18, 22 February 1921.

the Greek government did not place the responsibility for failure solely on the Greek army, but implied that the Allied States also shared responsibility for this failure. In addition, Greek priests were collecting money from local Greeks for soldiers wounded in the Greek army⁹⁹.

The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Greece opposed the idea of making peace with Turkey and wanted to establish Greek civil administration in the areas of Anatolia under Greek occupation. Allied representatives noted that Greece's stance could further escalate nationalist sentiment and heighten regional tensions. It was indicated that if the Greek Government did not initiate peace talks and continued its current policies, a major catastrophe would ensue¹⁰⁰.

Following the Turkish side's success in recent operations, Mustafa Kemal increased his power in the Grand National Assembly¹⁰¹. The Allied Powers had decided to propose a ceasefire to the warring parties to prevent the Turkish side from making further advances. In March 1922, the Allies proposed that half of Izmir and Eastern Thrace be given to Greece, but that Greece be evacuated from Anatolia¹⁰². Realizing that the war was coming to an end, Greece attempted to take certain measures to increase pressure on the Turkish people in Anatolia. In this context, the Greek government intended to establish armed gangs in the region¹⁰³. Greek authorities also implemented practices such as the conscription of men for labor and the requisitioning of food supplies, which served to destabilize the social order of the Muslim population¹⁰⁴. On 25 March 1922, General Papoulas, Commander-in-Chief of the Greeks in Anatolia, resigned and was replaced by General Georgios Hatzianestis. According to Hatzianestis, the only way to achieve success in Anatolia was to occupy Istanbul. After Hatzianestis took office, a large number of Greek soldiers resigned. On 16 July 1922, the Greek government announced its decision to occupy Istanbul. The Greek position resulted in a significant strain on diplomatic relations with Great Britain. General Harington told Greek officials that Greek warships should remain where they were and that all Greek troops moving to occupy Istanbul should stop. Knowing that the Greeks' hasty actions would lead to very serious

⁹⁹ BOA, DH.EUM.SSM., 47-05, 17 September 1921.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, FO 371/6533/34, 21 October 1921.

¹⁰¹ TNA, FO 371/6533/64/C.R.A.F./543/1.

¹⁰² E. DALEZIOU, *Britain and the Greek-Turkish war and settlement of 1919–1923: the pursuit of security by “proxy” in Western Asia Minor*, PhD Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2002, p. 234.

¹⁰³ TNA, FO 286/790/24, 25 March 1922.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, FO 286/790/32369/57, 20 February 1922.

consequences, Harington took urgent measures. As a result of the efforts of the Allied Powers, Greece abandoned this decision. Some British officials believed that the threat posed by the Greeks to Istanbul was a bluff¹⁰⁵.

The Greek army in Anatolia was in very poor condition in terms of morale. The Turkish side took advantage of this situation and launched an offensive on 26 August 1922. Violent clashes broke out between the Turkish and Greek armies¹⁰⁶. On 30 August, the Greeks were defeated in the direction of Afyon. After this date, the Greeks began their withdrawal from Anatolia¹⁰⁷. On 9 September 1922, the Turkish army entered Izmir, with only a few remaining Greek troops in front of them. Bombs were thrown at Turkish troops near the Palace Hotel, but the Turks continued to advance silently without retaliating¹⁰⁸. After the Greek army's decisive defeat, Greek refugees in Anatolia were preparing for mass migration¹⁰⁹. During the occupation of Anatolia, Greeks who had supported the Greek army wanted to be evacuated from Izmir. British and American ships were waiting in the port, ready to evacuate these people, and the evacuation was ultimately carried out¹¹⁰. Greek officials have appealed to the international community for assistance during the withdrawal. They have emphasized that the Christian world, in particular, should help Christians who have been forced to migrate from Anatolia¹¹¹. Greek authorities were unable to provide adequate shelter and food for refugees arriving from Anatolia. The Allied Powers, considering the approaching winter months, pressured the Greek Government to purchase grain for the refugees¹¹². The Greek Government had to deal with the refugee issue before it could recover from the shock of losing the war. The Greeks, believing that the occupation would not end this way, were unable to cope with the influx of refugees, both economically and politically.

¹⁰⁵ A. GÜLSEVİN TAMER, *The Greek-Turkish War of 1919–1922 in Greek Historiography: The Megali Idea in Action*, İstanbul, Libra Kitap, 2021, pp. 340–346; TNA, ADM 137/1771/292, 30 July 1922.

¹⁰⁶ A. KRZAK, *The Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922: Causes, Course, Effects* in «Studia Środkowoeuropejskie i Bałkanistyczne», No. 32, 2023, p. 82.

¹⁰⁷ M. S. ERKAN, *Türk Tarihinde Bir Dönüm Noktası, Büyük Taarruz ve 30 Ağustos Başkomutan Meydan Muharebesi* in «21. Yüzyılda Eğitim ve Toplum», Vol. 11, No. 32, 2022, p. 260.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371/7902/4, 21 September 1922.

¹⁰⁹ H. J. PSOMIADES, *Fridtjof Nansen and the Greek refugee crisis 1922–1924*, Illinois, The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center, 2011, p. 37.

¹¹⁰ TNA, FO 371/7949/64, 29 September 1922.

¹¹¹ BM, EVA, 029-41, 25 September 1922.

¹¹² TNA, FO 286/804/4/248, 21 October 1922.

4. *Conclusion*

Examining the occupation of Anatolia through British, Greek, Ottoman, American, and League of Nations archives provides a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective on the profound transformations that occurred between 1919 and 1922. These records show that the occupation was conducted in a far more complicated landscape than is typically depicted, where military actions on the ground, the internal dynamics of Turkish resistance, and the competing agendas of the Great Powers were inextricably linked. It is evident that during the occupation, the actions of both Greece and the Allied Powers had a direct impact on local responses, how the resistance networks were organized, and the transformation of the region's socio-political fabric.

The findings of this study suggest that Greece's military campaign in Anatolia evolved into an increasingly unsustainable endeavor. By confronting British, American and Greek military data with local Ottoman administrative records and League of Nations reports, it becomes clear that this failure was closely associated with both the unyielding struggle of the Turks and the logistical challenges of the Greek army, the political instability within Greece, and the slow decline of Allied support. Observations in these diverse archival reports reveal that the violence, administrative breakdown, and large-scale displacement documented in the region from the early stages of the occupation were among the most important factors determining the course of the war—factors that are often filtered through a single lens in traditional historiography but are vividly present when local and international sources are synthesized.

The other interesting observation during this period is that the Allied Powers frequently made inconsistent decisions. The attitude of London, which at times animated the Greek army and at other times repressed it; the misunderstandings with Paris and Rome; the frequent disregard for the warnings of British and American officers serving in the field—all these factors contributed to the failure of the occupation. As the records show, the positive assumptions about the future of Anatolia being worked out at the negotiating table were soon becoming null on the ground due to the stark realities of local resistance and the complexities of the Anatolian demographics documented in Ottoman and international archives.

The evaluations made in this article transcend a mere explanation of why the Greek occupation was not successful. This study aims to reduce the risk of one-dimensional interpretation by integrating British and American perspectives, as well as Greek and Ottoman voices. The synthesis of British, Greek, Ottoman, League of Nations, and American testimonies proves that the occupation years were characterized not only by wars but by world politics,

calculations of diplomats, and the profound experiences of the local population. Therefore, they are an invaluable source of knowledge about the long-term development of Turkish-Greek relations. In this context, the study achieves a necessary scholarly recalibration, presenting the occupation of Anatolia not as a narrative of a single archive, but as a multidimensional, dynamic, and objectively analyzed historical entity.

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Abstract

Questo articolo è una rivalutazione dell'occupazione dell'Anatolia da parte della Grecia tra il 1919 e il 1922, utilizzando un approccio multi-archivistico che integra fonti archivistiche britanniche, greche, ottomane, della Società delle Nazioni e americane. Lo studio dimostra che l'occupazione non può essere spiegata solo nel contesto del conflitto turco-greco; al contrario, la competizione tra le grandi potenze, la tensione tra questi stati, così come le realtà sul campo e i processi locali -spesso filtrati attraverso un'unica lente negli studi precedenti- vengono qui esplorati attraverso un'analisi comparativa di diversi documenti primari. Secondo questi rapporti archivistici multivocali, la violenza, il collasso amministrativo, il movimento dei rifugiati, l'economia in contrazione e la rottura della struttura sociale riscontrati sul campo non solo hanno frenato l'avanzata dell'esercito greco, ma hanno anche accelerato l'organizzazione della resistenza turca. Confrontando i registri diplomatici esterni con le voci locali e le osservazioni internazionali, questo studio evita una narrazione unidimensionale e affronta la precedente mancanza di oggettività nella storiografia. La sintesi di questi diversi materiali archivistici permette di reinterpretare il periodo dell'occupazione, valutare la storia recente della regione dell'Anatolia in modo più completo e tracciare la traiettoria a lungo termine delle relazioni turco-greche all'interno di un quadro equilibrato e multidimensionale. Inoltre, questa analisi svela i costi socio-politici dell'occupazione fondendo dati micro-storici con strategie macro-politiche. L'articolo va oltre le narrazioni tradizionali per porre le complesse dinamiche di potere del periodo su un terreno oggettivo, offrendo una prospettiva fresca sulle radici storiche degli sviluppi regionali. In definitiva, questa ricerca illumina non solo un processo militare, ma anche i traumi collettivi e le rotture diplomatiche che hanno plasmato i processi di costruzione dello Stato-nazione sia della Turchia moderna che della Grecia.

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Guerra turco-greca
occupazione anatolica
Turchia
Grecia

Abstract

This article is a reassessment of the 1919–1922 occupation of Anatolia by Greece using a multi-archival approach that integrates British, Greek, Ottoman, League of Nations, and American archival sources. The study shows that the occupation cannot be explained only in the context of the Turkish-Greek conflict; instead, competition among great powers, the tension between these states, as well as realities on the ground and local processes—often filtered through a single lens in previous studies—are explored here through a comparative analysis of diverse primary records. According to these multi-vocal archival reports, the violence, administrative breakdown, movement of refugees, shrinking economy and breakdown of the social structure encountered in the field not only curtailed the progress of the Greek army but also hastened the organization of Turkish resistance. By confronting external diplomatic records with local voices and international observations, this study avoids a one-dimensional narrative and addresses the previous lack of objectivity in the historiography. The synthesis of these diverse archival materials makes it possible to reinterpret the period of occupation, evaluate the recent history of the Anatolia region in a more comprehensive way, and trace the long-term trajectory of Turkish-Greek relations within a balanced and multi-dimensional framework. Furthermore, this analysis uncovers the socio-political costs of the occupation by blending micro-historical data with macro-political strategies. The article moves beyond traditional narratives to place the complex power dynamics of the period on objective ground, offering a fresh perspective on the historical roots of regional developments. Ultimately, this research illuminates not only a military process but also the collective traumas and diplomatic ruptures that shaped the nation-state building processes of both modern Turkey and Greece.

KEYWORDS

Turkish-Greek War
Anatolian Occupation
Turkey
Greece