

## **VAHAN CARDASHIAN AND THE CRUSADE TO SABOTAGE TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

### **AVİM**

Following the American entry into the First World War in the spring of 1917, the formal diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States ended and were not re-established until 1927. On 6 April 1917, the US declared war on Germany, the Ottoman Empire's ally in the war, rendering it impossible for the Ottoman Empire to maintain its formal diplomatic relations. Nonetheless, despite the formal break up of relations, a state of war did not arise between the two states.

After the end of the First World War, the US was represented by a High Commissioner in Istanbul, the Ottoman Turkish capital then under the occupation of the Entente powers. The Entente occupation ended with the successful conclusion of the Turkish War of Liberation (1919-1922) and the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty. By 1925, the new Republic of Türkiye (Turkey) had re-established diplomatic relations with the countries it had been at war with for years.

In 1925, there was only one major state left with which the new Turkish republic could not establish normal relations: the US. The negotiations to re-establish formal relations between the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Admiral Bristol were held in the new Turkish capital Ankara for about three weeks in early 1927. On 17 February 1927, the final notes were signed and exchanged. Thus, after a ten-year break, an agreement was reached that had officially reestablished the Turkish-American relations.

Following the signing of the agreement, the first Ambassador of the United States to Ankara, Joseph C. Grew, would arrive in September 1927. Turkish Ambassador Ahmet Muhtar Bey would arrive in the US at the end of November of the same year.

However, these efforts and the agreement to establish formal relations also met storm of protest from the Armenian nationalists and their supporters in the US. In April, the Armenian Press Bureau held a mass protest meeting in New York, presided over by Vahan Cardashian, and joined by Senator William Kin, diplomat James Gerard, and the Chairman of the Committee Opposed to the Lausanne Treaty David Hunter Miller.

Vahan Cardashian was born in Kayseri, the Ottoman Empire. He emigrated to the US in 1902 and earned his law degree from Yale University in 1908. He served as a counselor for the Ottoman Embassy in Washington D.C. and the Ottoman Consulate in New York from 1910 to 1915, also becoming the fiscal agent of the Ottoman Empire in the US.

However, his anti-Turkish activities led the termination of his employment in 1915.

The efforts of Cardashian and his supporters in connection with the Turkish-American agreement of 1927 show how the interests of a major power such as the US could be held hostage by small lobbying groups. It also shows how detached from reality these groups were.

Cardashian sent a letter to the US President, alleging that the United States is now \* in a state of war with Turkey and that if a Turkish Ambassador should venture here, he would have the status of an enemy alien, subject to arrest. Thus, 9 years after the end of a war, in which the Americans and the Turks had never been in a state of war, Cardashian was trying to pull the US into a never-ending conflict with the new Turkish republic against the interests of the American people.

Cardashian also stated that there are in the United States nearly a million former subjects of Turkey opposing the Turkish-American agreement. In doing so, Cardashian had unwittingly undercut the major tenets of the Armenian nationalist propaganda, namely that more than a million Ottoman Armenians perished during the 1915 Events. In 1914, before the war, the population of the Ottoman Armenians was approximately 1.5 million. If by 1927 nearly a million Armenians existed in the US, not to mention those settled in Syria, Lebanon, and Soviet Armenia (approximately 550,000), then the whole argument of more than a million Armenian deaths becomes untenable by Cardashians own admission.

In support of Cardashians crusade, Bishop Manning also sent a letter, arguing that formal relations could not be established unless the Turks agree to ... the fulfillment of the Wilsonian Award to Armenia □ an indication of limited intellect and grasp of reality of its author.

The efforts Cardashian and his supporters clearly show the problems that can be created via lobbying by small interest groups. It also shows the how the Turkish-American relations had been targeted and sabotaged by the lobbying groups, beginning as early as 1920s.

701.6711

*How*

*Mr. Grew agrees that this should not be acknowledged.*  
5/28/27 2018  
*AE*

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Index Bureau  
RECEIVED  
25 April 1927  
APR 27 1927  
Dep't. of State

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS  
5/28/27  
1927  
File #11

Mr. President:

I submit, respectfully, to your attention the annexed copies of a Protest, to the Secretary of State, against the proposed exchange of Ambassadors with Turkey, adopted at a mass-meeting, in New-York, in the evening of the 22nd, and of letters from Bishop Manning and Mr. David Hunter Miller, read at that meeting, and of my own remarks, as Presiding Officer.

There exist four separate grounds for the opinion that the United States is now, technically, in a state of war with Turkey. Two of these opinions have been advanced by the State Department, itself, in its advocacy of the Lausanne Treaty, and in its demand for a share in Mosul oil- an enemy property- a spoil of war.

Therefore, the Executive has no power to resume diplomatic relations with Turkey, except by affirmative action of Congress; and, if a Turkish Ambassador should venture here, he would have the status of an enemy alien, subject to arrest, by constituted authorities, if they observe, as they should, their duty, or, in the event of their failure so to do, by private citizens.

Likewise, that part of the Agreement which, according to Turkish Foreign Commissar, puts the Lausanne Treaty into force, is unconstitutional. The Executive has power to enter into provisional agreements with foreign governments pending negotiation or ratification of a treaty, but he has no power to put into effect, by a mere exchange of diplomatic notes, a treaty which has been duly debated and rejected by the Senate. In the circumstances, international law alone must govern the relations between the two countries.

In its prosecution of the campaign for ratification of the Treaty, the Department resorted to terrorism, deception and intrigue. Furthermore, in the light of its record at Smyrna and at Lausanne, and of its known purpose in effecting an obviously illegitimate and ultra vires agreement, I am of the opinion that the Department is disqualified to deal with the Turkish matter, and that its acts may, and should, be disregarded by aggrieved parties.

Respectfully,

To the President,  
Washington, D. C.

*Vahan Cardashian*

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JUL 11 1935

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About the Author :

To cite this article: AVİM, . 2025. "VAHAN CARDASHIAN AND THE CRUSADE TO SABOTAGE TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2024 / 17. May 29. Accessed July 08, 2025. <https://avim.org.tr/public/en/Yorum/VAHAN-CARDASHIAN-AND-THE-CRUSADE-TO-SABOTAGE-TURKISH-AMERICAN-RELATIONS>



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