

Losing wealth or restricting the poison? Changing opium policies in early republican Turkey, 1923-1945

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1. INTRODUCTION

*The republican government has fulfilled all but one of its promises to the public. The one and only promise it has been unable to keep has to do with the opium problem!*¹

Emin Sazak, deputy from Eskişehir, made this statement before parliament on 24 June 1938. Such explicit criticism however, was unusual under the authoritarian single-party regime of the inter-war era. Sazak's reproach regarding lack of attention to the issue hints at the contentious nature of the opium problem, and all the dissenting opinions, clashing priorities, conflicts of interest, and divisiveness it created among Turkish ruling elites. This article examines the changing policies regarding opium in early republican Turkey by focusing on the conflicting discourses and political agendas of the various actors involved.

Received: 2012-06-22 • Revised: 2013-05-09 • Accepted: 2013-06-03

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1. «Toprak mahsulleri ofisi kanunu layihası ve İktisad, Ziraat, Maliye ve Bütçe encümenleri mazbataları (1/1038) (Draft bill No. 1/1038 on the Soil Products Office and minutes of the meetings of the Councils of Economy, Agriculture, Treasury and Budget)», (1938: 312).

In 1933, Turkey enacted a series of laws that included ratification of international conventions on opium, establishment of the Turkish Narcotic Drugs Monopoly, state control of narcotic drugs and amendment of the Criminal Code. The new approach redefined opium-related concepts and the subsequent laws transformed all stages of the opium industry, from poppy production to the manufacture of derivatives, from export of raw opium to the import of derivatives. With the enactment of these new laws, the state set the rules for the opium business, and began to play a central role through the establishment of the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly. The legal changes were driven by international and domestic tensions and the changing perception of the «opium problem» throughout the world, but their implementation created new conflicts among Turkish governing elites. In this context opium became a significant issue in Turkish politics during the 1930s, leading to the first instances of political conflict over opium in modern Turkish history.

A second crisis led to the prohibition of opium production in 1971. Political pressure from the USA motivated the government instituted after the 1971 coup d'état to introduce this prohibition, which was repealed in 1974 by the coalition government that was formed after the 1973 general elections. Due to its recent and international nature, this second opium crisis is the subject of a number of studies² in Turkish historiography. These studies usually mention the regulations of the 1930s simply to provide a brief historical outline of the opium issue. The only detailed study of the opium context of the 1930s is a discussion of the history of drug addiction and organized crime in Turkey, found in Erdinç (2004)³. Though very informative on international smuggling and the complex diplomacy of the pre-regulation period, Erdinç's study lacks a satisfactory, archive-based analysis of the post-regulation period. A historical discussion of changes in opium politics in Turkey during the 1930s is sorely lacking in the literature. This article aims to satisfy the need by approaching the issue with regard to both international transformations and domestic political conflict.

Apart from the studies focusing directly on opium politics, it is also remarkable that there is virtually no reference to the «opium question» in the economic, political and/or diplomatic histories of early republican Turkey. The sole reference is found in Goloğlu's

2. For a description of the events from the perspective of an American Foreign Service officer serving in Turkey from 1970 to 1974, see SPAIN (1975). For two works in Turkish discussing the crisis as a form of «American imperialism», see ALTINDAL (1979) and SONGAR (1974). For a discussion of Turkish-USA relations, comparing the opium crisis of the early 1970s to the 2002-3 Iraq crises, see ROBINS (2007). Finally, for two recent accounts addressing the «experiences of opium poppy eradication and re-introduction in the early 1970s» based on oral history interviews of retired poppy farmers, see EVERED (2011a, 2011b).

3. Erdinç's chapters on opium in the 1930s are primarily based on USA intelligence reports regarding narcotics, from the United States Embassy archives in Ankara.

book chronicling the significant events of the early Republican Era from the official perspective. There is a short chapter entitled «Opium Law» which describes it as the «most important affair of 1933» (Goloğlu, 1972: 77-78). Although the history of the opium problem offers a rich vein of information even for conventional Turkish historiography, there is no reference to the issue. This article suggests that such overall neglect cannot be attributed to the mere lack of primary archival sources from this period. The «absence» of the issue primarily stems from certain dominant epistemological assumptions in the economic and political historiography of the early Republican Era.

The founding and construction of the new republican nation-state occupied the early Republican Era between 1923 and 1945. The era was characterized by an etatist economy, a single-party political regime and nationalist ideology. This trio thematically dominates the historiography of early republican Turkey⁴, in which the study of these three themes separately has curtailed initiatives that address issues such as the opium problem; where economy, politics, and ideology intersect. This article attempts to remove historiographical blinders in order to focus on how these three themes intersected and were manifested in a specific issue: the opium problem.

However, historiographical disregard for intersecting themes does not completely explain the absence of a convincing discussion of opium policies in the early Republican Era. This disregard has been reinforced by the epistemological premise about historical agency that upheld the Kemalist state elites, successors of a strong state tradition with specific bureaucratic and military characteristics, acting as the sole, dominant, and homogenous agents of economic, political, and ideological life. This article challenges the prevailing premises of early republican historiography regarding both the absolute dominance and the homogeneity of the ruling elites. The first premise is mainly the result of an overemphasis on the intentions and discourses of state elites. When official declarations are taken at face value, the focus is generally on how the Kemalist elites managed to produce policies, rather than how they were executed, or even whether they could be implemented⁵. This article gives attention to the difference between the declared and realized aims, by examining: 1) the historical development and legislation resulting from the opium problem, 2) the execution of these measures, 3) what Turk-

4. For some examples, see AHMAD (1981), BARLAS (1998), GOLOĞLU (1972), LEWIS (1968), PARLA (1992) and ZÜRCHER (2003).

5. Historiographic commitment to the views held by state elites, regardless of their actual practical power, is also fed by the scarcity of primary archival sources. However, in recent years, this scarcity has been offset by the emergence of new archival sources or the re-evaluation of existing ones. For the former, see AKÇETİN (2000: 79-102), AKIN (2007: 435-457), METINSOY (2011: 699-719); for the latter, see BROCKETT (1998: 44-66), ÖZBEK (2003: 219-240).

ish ruling elites intended to do about the opium problem, and 4) how solutions were put into practice.

Moreover, this article highlights the heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity of the ruling elites, to challenge the second premise regarding historical agency. The divisions among Kemalist elites are generally discussed either as mainly personal conflicts among prominent figures of the Republican People's Party or as differences of opinion regarding the content and extent of the revolutions after the foundation of the Republic⁶. However, segments of ruling elites *could* and actually *did* clash over differences in their institutional priorities; which were exemplified in the management of opium policies. For example, the Ministry of Economy pursued policies to maintain the wealth generated by the country's vital export crop, in order to meet the urgent economic needs of the new Republic. The Ministry of Health, however, sought policies on this «poison» that were more restrictive and compatible with the accepted international conventions. Colliding expectations, visions, and strategies regarding how to address the opium problem during the 1930s led to division and conflict among the state elites.

2. CHANGES IN OPIUM POLICIES AND POLITICS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Opium is one of the oldest and most widespread agricultural products in the world. Its cultivation dates from 3500 BC and was extensive throughout the civilisations of Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece and Egypt. Its popularity derives from widespread use of the poppy flower for food and anaesthesia, and from the various ritualistic and cultural meanings that have become attached to opium. During its long history, knowledge, perceptions and feelings about opium have varied from one age, place or community to another. Brook and Wakabayashi (2000: 25) highlight that opium has a «polymorphous character», which lends to it many and changeable meanings in different social, political and economic contexts. However, by the twentieth century, its multifaceted nature had triggered worldwide controversy regarding how to define, police, and regulate opium. Courtwright (2002: 167) observes that the «collective shift in priorities» on the opium question did not reach domestic and international politics until the early 1900s, not before.

6. Regarding the well-known İnönü –Bayar and İnönü– Peker political rivalry, see KARPAT (1991). On the differences of opinions on certain principles of the new regime, see HALE (1980) and UYAR (1997).

During the nineteenth century, opium became one of the most important commodities for the European empires, and its trade was crucial in the colonisation of the Far East. As a commodity, it provided huge profits that led to a transfer of wealth and power to Western imperial regimes (Brook and Wakabayashi, 2000: 25). Opium was widely used as a medical palliative and for recreational purposes in the Far East. The Western colonial powers made no attempt to change or suppress the recreational use of opium due to an unwillingness to lose profits, an interest in benefitting from its medicinal use, and a desire to avoid potential upheavals in the colonies if its use were to be curbed. They also believed that opium use was inherent to the Oriental people (Gavit, 1925: 55-58). Whatever the reasons, and regardless of its medical, moral, and cultural connotations, Western traders viewed opium as a very profitable commodity.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the situation began to change as the cumulative result of many different but interconnected factors. New technologies -most significantly the development of hypodermic syringes- and the rapidly developing chemical industry made access to opium and its derivatives easier, cheaper, and faster for the masses in Western countries (Courtwright, 2002: 173-179; McAllister, 2000: 14-15). As the «democratisation» of opium spread the usage of this drug beyond the borders of China, public opinion began to sway under the increasing influence of medical professionals campaigning against the non-medical use of opium⁷. The USA led this campaign motivated both by competition with Great Britain's interests in the Asian opium traffic and the restriction-oriented policy demands of domestic reform groups (McAllister, 2000: 27-28; Walker, 1991). Additionally, the «internationalist» mind-set in diplomatic circles since the mid-1800s directly influenced the call for intercontinental cooperation and negotiation regarding the drug issue; which materialised in the first quarter of the twentieth century (McAllister, 2000: 20). The power relations affecting the future of opium policies were profoundly transformed by complex and multi-layered dynamics that included: new technologies, spreading opium usage, changes in public opinion, the medicalisation of opium and the increasing power of medical professionals, competing imperial interests, and the leading international role of the USA in the anti-opium campaign.

In this changing context, opium came to be seen as a «poison» that was dangerous to society as a whole and should only be used for scientific or medical purposes (Gavit, 1925:

7. On the «democratisation» of opium use in the Western world, see COURTWRIGHT (1982). For the prominent figures of the anti-opium group and their efforts to change public opinion in China and Britain, see SZE (1926) and WILLOUGHBY (1925). For other social reform groups demanding regulation for various reasons, see BROWN (1973: 97-111), CHAMBERLAIN (1937: 285-286) and COURTWRIGHT (2002: 169-173). For a good example of the medicalisation of opium, see the 1,000-page report written by a group of American physicians covering all aspects of the opium problem, from the medical perspective (TERRY and PELLEN, 1928).

169-170; McAllister, 2000: 46-50). In the medicalisation discourse, opium users were no longer seen as inferior races or criminals, but addicts in need of treatment. Moreover, the opium problem was no longer limited to the Far East, but became an issue that should be governed by an international body, such as the League of Nations, «for the sake of the general progress and peace» (Crowdy, 1928: 350). As a result, the governing economic principle of the opium industry also shifted from a *laissez-faire* mentality toward restriction and selective prohibition. New policies were formulated that established special governmental bodies regulating the opium problem. To enhance state control, measures were introduced that limited opium production to the level needed for medical and scientific aims, along with an import-export certification system including double-verification by the two trading states, prohibition of unauthorised individuals or institutions from participating in domestic and international trade of raw or manufactured opium products, and a world-wide, transparent and demonstrable information sharing system for all available and estimated economic indicators for opium in each country (Gavit, 1925: 169-219; Inglis, 1975: 154-177; McAllister, 2000: 43-102; Willoughby, 1925; Wright, 1925: 559-568). All of these measures were discussed in the international conferences on opium, though consensus was difficult to achieve due to the conflicting interests of different states. As a result, two international conventions were developed at Geneva, one in 1925 and the other in 1931⁸.

The general impact of the changing international atmosphere towards opium producing countries was either restriction and control or total prohibition of opium production in the first half of the twentieth century. Producer countries began to report their figures for area, production, and quantity of exports to the corresponding supervisory international organisation –first the League of Nations and then the United Nations– while maintaining collaborative political relations with the supervisory body. According to the 1949 United Nations *Bulletin on Narcotics*, opium cultivation was prohibited in Egypt, Afghanistan, Japan, and China, and restricted to certain regions or provinces in Yugoslavia, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and the USSR. Iran had decreed prohibition of opium production in 1946, but this decree was not enacted into law by the Iranian parliament⁹. The overall trend toward restriction and/or prohibition of cultivation had significant political, social and economic consequences for the producing countries.

8. Prior to the 1931 Geneva Conference, the 1909 Shanghai Opium Commission, the 1911 Hague Opium Conference, and the 1924–1925 Geneva Conferences on opium were all concerned with the development of regulation efforts.

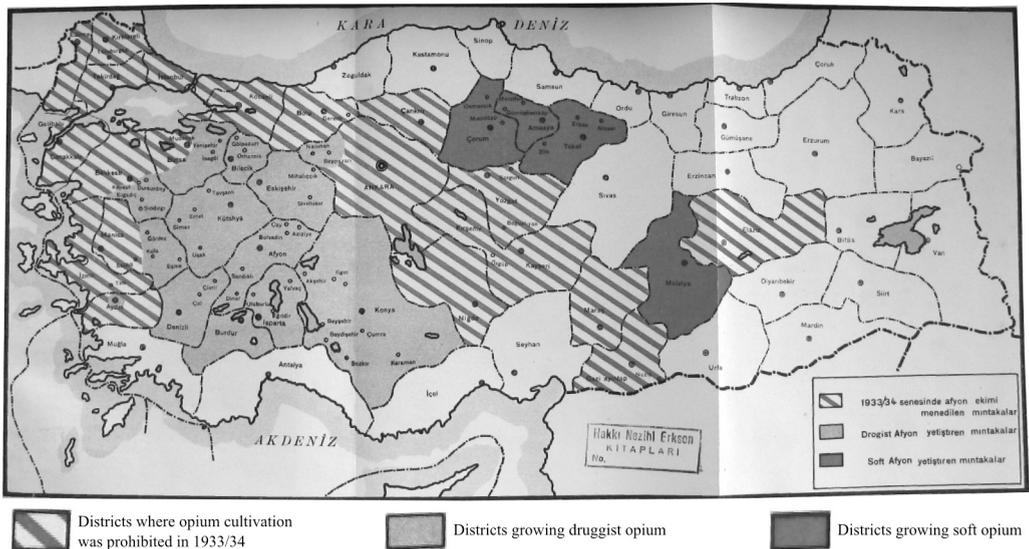
9. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (25 May 2012: 6-38). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1949-01-01_1_page005.html.

3. TURKEY AS AN OPIUM-PRODUCING COUNTRY: AN OVERVIEW

Turkey has always been one of the largest opium producing and exporting countries in the world. Since the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations, which is the authorised body for international drug control, has considered Turkey, along with India, as «traditional legal opium producers» because both countries have historically had the biggest share of legal production areas. Between 2005 and 2010, for instance, Turkey was responsible for 48 per cent of total legal opium production, while India produced 14 per cent of the total (Haşhaş Raporu, 2010: 5-6). The degree of historical presence of opium in the Turkish economy and culture is even reflected in the name of the city in the heart of the production area: Afyon, which means «opium» in Turkish. Map 1 illustrates the geographical distribution of cultivation, showing the districts in Turkey where opium cultivation was permitted or prohibited by 1933/34.

MAP 1

Districts in Turkey where opium cultivation was permitted or prohibited by 1933/34

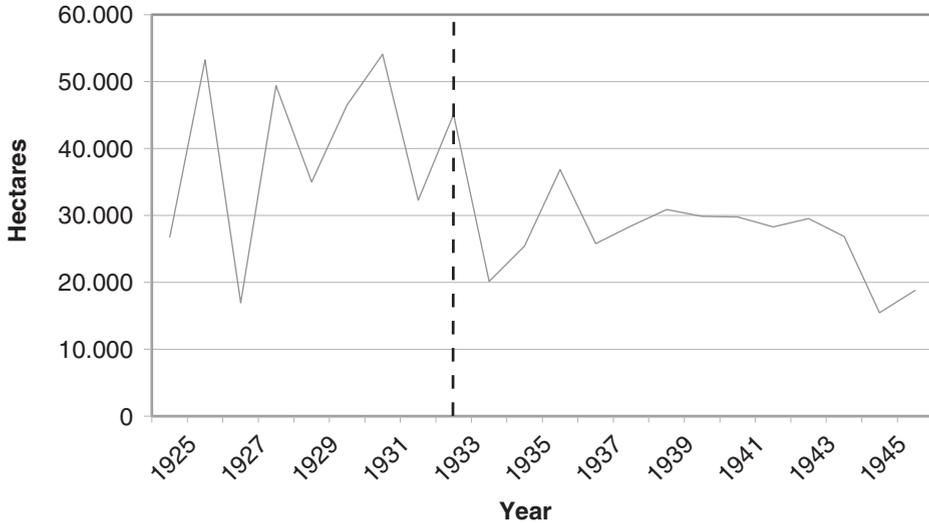


Source: Narcotic Drugs Monopoly (s.a.).

The map shows how cultivation was concentrated mainly in two geographical areas, which produced two different kinds of opium. The «*droğist*» (druggist) opium was cultivated mainly around Afyon in the west, while «soft opium» was produced in the districts around Amasya and Tokat in the north. According to a 1950 article in the *Bulletin on Narcotics* on Turkish cultivation, druggist opium was used exclusively for medical purposes.

Soft opium, with its higher morphine content, was mainly preferred by addicts for smoking purposes¹⁰. Map 1 also shows the districts where opium cultivation was prohibited by 1933. Out of fifty-six provinces, fourteen were allowed to cultivate the opium poppy and incise the capsules. Production in other provinces was prohibited by successive legislation in 1933¹¹. The impact of prohibition can also be seen in the production area data. Figure 1 shows the area of opium cultivation in hectares from 1925 to 1946.

FIGURE 1
Opium cultivation area in Turkey, 1925 – 1946



Source: Doğukan (1949: 49)¹².

The area used for opium cultivation was highly volatile, especially in the 1920s. It decreased sharply from over 50,000 hectares in 1926 to around 17,000 hectares in 1927, and returned to the 1926 level in 1928. Several factors could have contributed to this

10. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (15 July 2013: 13-25). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1950-01-01_1_page004.html

11. The fourteen provinces allowed producing opium were Afyonkarahisar, Burdur, Bilecik, Denizli, Eskişehir, Isparta, Konya, Kütahya, Amasya, Çorum, Tokat and Malatya, two districts of Ankara and three districts of Bursa.

12. The data are taken from an article by Doğukan, who worked as an agricultural engineer at the Soil Products Office in the 1940s. Doğukan states that he personally gathered the data for the years 1925, 1926 and 1927, and gathered data for the remaining years from the records of the Public Directorate of Statistics. However, he does not cite any specific references. I have used Doğukan's data because it is the only source offering serial data of opium cultivation in the area for the period before 1950.

volatility, such as price instability, climatic factors, and changing international market conditions during the 1920s. Fluctuations in total cultivated area continued from 1928 to 1933, though less violently than in the preceding three years. Two additional factors that very likely contributed to the rapid shifts between 1928 and 1933 were the emergence of a buyer cartel established by European opium manufacturers in 1928, and the worldwide effects of the Great Depression. Another sharp decrease occurred from 1933 to 1934, when total cultivated area dropped from 45,082 hectares to 20,168 hectares (see dotted line on Figure 1). This drop was mainly due to newly adopted opium restriction measures imposed by the Turkish government. After the 1933 prohibition, the cultivated area never exceeded the pre-legislation level of 45,082 hectares.

Here it should be noted that in early republican Turkey poppy cultivation was overwhelmingly the domain of small family farmers; this is primarily because opium is one of the most labour intensive crops, with special harvesting requirements. The 1950 *Bulletin* article on Turkish opium cultivation described its importance for the subsistence of small farmers and the difficulties involved in replacing opium with other cash crops due to climatic and soil conditions¹³. There is no satisfactory statistical data to provide more detailed information on opium producers in early republican Turkey, but the available data estimates that 80,000 to 100,000 peasant households were involved in cultivating opium in the 1930s¹⁴. That translates into approximately 1.3 per cent of total agricultural employment, and 1.1 per cent of total employment¹⁵. A 1933 estimate by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry indicates that approximately 600,000 people, or four per cent of the total population, were involved in the opium sector, including producers, merchants, and their families (Bahtiyar, 1933: 6).

Turkey did not produce opium gum for domestic consumption; it was an export-oriented commodity and had no relevance nationally. The only domestic use of the opium poppy involved seed harvesting for oil extraction, not for gum¹⁶. The main purchasers of

13. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (15 July 2013: 13-25). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1950-01-01_1_page004.html

14. Bahtiyar states that there were 100,000 peasant families cultivating opium in the 1930s (Bahtiyar, 1933: 6). However, the article published in the 1950 Bulletin of the United Nations says that *the poppy-plant is grown in Turkey by about 80,000 peasants inhabiting the (permitted) districts*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (15 July 2013: 13-25). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1950-01-01_1_page004.html.

15. Between 1930 and 1945, there were approximately 6 million persons employed in agriculture, with total employment of almost 7 million active persons in Turkey. For employment data, see İSTATİSTİK GÖSTERGELER, 1923-2008 (2009: 164-165).

16. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (15 July 2013: 13-25). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1950-01-01_1_page004.html.

Turkish opium in the early Republican Era were the USA and European countries, especially Germany, France, England and the Netherlands (Narcotic Drugs Monopoly, s.a.: 100). It will be important to keep this sense of Turkey as an opium producing country in mind as we begin a more focused discussion of the opium problem for Turkish governing elites during the early Republican Era.

4. THE NEW TURKISH REPUBLIC IN THE CROSSFIRE OF THE OPIUM QUESTION

The new Turkish Republic signed the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 after World War I. Like all other peace treaties signed after World War I, the Lausanne Treaty included an article recognising the 1912 Hague Convention on opium (Bahtiyar, 1933: 22). However, the advisory character of the Convention did not lead to any serious changes. When Süreyya Bey, the Undersecretary of Agriculture, represented Turkey at the 1925 Geneva Conference, he abstained from voting for the American proposal to control the production and distribution of raw opium and coca-leaves. He also withheld from signing the final declaration, most likely due to sovereignty concerns (Gavit, 1925: 197, 200).

Before the 1930s, there were no legal restrictions on opium production or trade in Turkey. Like any other crop, opium was produced by peasants and sold to commission merchants or big opium trade companies. After 1926, opium was sold on the exchange markets of Istanbul and Izmir. The laboratories of these exchange markets determined the morphine levels of the product, which was an important parameter for price setting. Before this date, testing was only done on demand from European buyers (Erdemir, 1996: 28). A comprehensive study conducted in 1933 on behalf of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry notes that exchange market laboratory accreditation of morphine levels was considered advantageous for Turkish opium merchants in the export markets (Bahtiyar, 1933: 14).

As with the production and domestic trade of opium, the manufacture of alkaloids had been unrestricted before the 1930s¹⁷. There were three alkaloid factories in Istanbul. The

17. Alkaloid is isolated from the milky exudates of the unripe seed pods of the opium poppy. The six opium alkaloids that occur naturally in the largest amounts are morphine, narcotine, codeine, thebaine, papaverine and narceine. Three of these, morphine, codeine and thebaine, are used in the drug industry and are now under international control. Apart from these, about twenty other alkaloids exist in opium but are medically and economically insignificant. See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (30 March 2012). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1953-01-01_3_page005.html.

first was the Oriental Products Company, established in 1926 with Japanese capital, and located in Taksim, on the north shore of the Golden Horn. The second was the Medical and Chemical Pharmacy (*Eczayı Tıbbiye ve Kimyeviye - ETKİM*), founded in May 1929 by Nissim Taranto, a well-known Turkish-Jewish opium merchant, and located in Eyüp. The Taranto family had been involved in the opium trade since the 1860s and ETKİM had numerous international contacts for exporting manufactured opium derivatives. The third and largest factory was the Turkish Medical and Chemical Pharmacy Company (*Türk Eczaya Tıbbiye ve Kimyeviye Şirketi - TETKAŞ*), which was founded in December 1929 with French capital, and located on the Bosphorus in Kuzguncuk, a neighborhood of Istanbul. Its executive board included men such as Hasan Bey (Saka), a leading Turkish politician, and Adrien Billiotti, a French lawyer and partner in sixteen other companies in Turkey (Erdoğan, 2004: 54-69)¹⁸.

The alkaloid-manufacturing factories in Istanbul felt the brunt of the international pressure on Turkey in the early 1930s. As a participant of the 1931 Geneva Conference, the second largest international gathering on opium, Turkey was forced to shut these factories down due to the illicit trafficking originating from them. Additionally, the Conference raised the necessity to decrease Turkey's opium production in order to comply with the limits set for «medical and scientific purposes» (McAllister, 2000: 95). After the Conference, US diplomats, representatives of the League of Nations, and Russell Pasha¹⁹ exerted even greater pressure, accusing Turkey of smuggling and of not «understanding the humanitarian aspects of the struggle against narcotic drugs»²⁰. Turkey worked to refute the allegations of smuggling by auditing the factories and introducing a compulsory im-

18. Erdoğan states that these factories were linked to international mafia organisations and domestically backed by some of the Turkish political elites, known as the *Aferistler* (speculators; from the French term «*affairiste*»). The group met at Is Bank, a private bank founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1924 and governed by Celal Bayar from its foundation.

19. Sir Thomas Wentworth Russell, known throughout the world as Russell Pasha, was an Egyptian civil servant, and the Head of the Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, which the Egyptian Government set up in 1929. The *Bulletin of Narcotics*, published in 1954, described him as a *legendary figure* based on his *outstanding reports to the Advisory Committee (of the League of Nations), which still constitute a very important source of information on illicit traffic and illicit traffickers*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (20 June 2012). http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1954-01-01_3_page008.html.

20. Given mounting international pressure, two moments profoundly impacted Turkish policy: first, the articles of Russell Pasha published in the Egyptian press and his report on illegal narcotics trafficking presented to the Opium Commission of League of Nations in 1931; and second, the visit of Mr. Exrant, the Director of the Welfare Affairs and Opium Branch of League of Nations, to Turkey in the spring of 1932. For the first two, see Prime Ministry State Archive Office of Republican Archive (PMRA) Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/180.243.8. and PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/180.243.17. For the second, see PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.230.5.

port certification system in February 1931²¹. That month, the factories were closed down temporarily²².

Along with international pressure on Turkey, the domestic economic conditions relating to the opium market were far from satisfactory. The sharp decline in prices as a result of the Great Depression impacted the agricultural sector by the early 1930s. In 1932, opium prices reached their lowest level in fifteen years (Bahtiyar, 1933: 14; Ziya, 1932: 18). Moreover, European opium manufacturing firms established a cartel in 1928, the *Convention Internationale des Opiaces*, which decreased prices in favour of the buyers (Babaoğlu, 1997: 105; Narcotic Drugs Monopoly, s.a.: 97-98)²³. Turkey responded to deteriorating market conditions by establishing two new institutions in 1932: the Joint Central Office of Turkey and Yugoslavia for Opium Sale (*Türkiye-Yugoslavya Müşterek Afyon Satışı Merkez Bürosu*) and the Sales Union of Turkish Opium Producers (*Türkiye Afyon Yetiştiriciler Satış Birliği*)²⁴. While the first body struggled to survive in the following years, following its own charter as a «front involving the best-quality opium producers against the monopoly buyers»²⁵, the second institution was soon replaced by the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly (*Uyuşturucu Maddeler İnhisarı*).

In 1931-2, the Turkish government implemented partial policies that fell far short of addressing opium-related problems. In early 1933, it made a radical decision to ratify the current international conventions on opium. On 25 December 1932, the state-run Anatolian Agency described the government's narcotics programme as «Turkey's Christmas gift to the world»²⁶. The programme, which had seven articles, was formulated with Mustafa Kemal's personal attention following meetings with some «grand persons», ac-

21. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/20.32..7.

22. While the Oriental Products Company was shut down in February 1931, ETKİM continued to manufacture codeine. ETKİM was shut down in May of the same year and then re-opened in July. TETKAŞ continued production secretly. For more on the ambivalent policies regarding these factories in 1931 and 1932, see ERDİNÇ (2004: 87-114).

23. The founding firms were E. Merck, Hoffman-La Roche et. Co., Knoll A. G., C. H. Böhringer Söhne, Thomae, Sandoz, J. F. Macfarlan and Co., T. and H. Smith Ltd., Laboratoire Clin. Comar et Cie, Comptoir Central des Alcoloides, Société de Recherches Chimiques et d'Applications Industrielles, and Nederlandsche Cocainfabrik.

24. For the Sale Office, see PMRA Catalogues of the Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/26.16..9. For the Sale Union, see «Türkiye afyon yetiştiriciler satış birliği hakkında kanun layihası (Draft bill on the Sales Union of Turkish opium producers)», (1932: 478-480). In assembly discussions of the bill on the sales union, Mustafa Şeref Bey, the Minister of Economy, insisted that the government not aim to establish a monopoly on opium. Curiously, the official position on the negation of the opium monopoly changed a few months later.

25. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/26.16..9.

26. For the programme, see PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/32.80..7.

according to the US ambassador at that time, Charles Sherrill (1934: 91)²⁷. On 14 January 1933, the Parliament enacted Law No. 2108, adopting all international conventions on opium²⁸. In the League of Nations, Turkey's change of official position and favourable vote decided the fate of the ballot on the conventions, which went into effect on 13 April 1933, with 28 votes in favour and 27 against. Finally, domestic law came into compliance with international conventions due to the enactment on 31 May 1933 of Law No. 2253 on the Narcotics Drugs Monopoly.

Law No. 2253 changed Turkish opium politics, putting the newly-established Monopoly at the core of the whole opium business. By defining prepared opium and its ingredients, the law authorised the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly to produce, export and import those ingredients under the Ministry of Economy. The Monopoly was to declare the price of raw opium, buy raw opium from producers and/or traders, analyse purchased opium to measure morphine content, and standardise it before being exported. The Board of Directors of the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly was to consist of five members: one director and two members appointed by the Ministry of Economy, one by the Ministry of Agriculture, and one by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The Monopoly was assigned a central office in Istanbul, and a branch in Izmir²⁹.

The establishment of the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly was a mechanism by which the government intervened in the agricultural sector in a way that was compatible with the nature of that decade, known as the etatist era (Boratav, 1998: 45-62; Owen and Pamuk, 1998: 10-29)³⁰. However, the monopolistic regulation of opium was not caused solely by

27. Charles Sherrill was appointed US ambassador to Ankara in May 1932. Both Sherrill and Mustafa Kemal were former soldiers, and became close friends, to the extent that Mustafa Kemal wanted Sherrill to write his biography. In their meetings for the biography, Sherrill lobbied for progress on the narcotics issue, intimating that the illegal opium trade was backed by some Turkish politicians and bureaucrats. Disturbed by those intimations, Mustafa Kemal personally convened the Cabinet, and after this extra-ordinary meeting, which lasted two days, launched the programme. For Sherrill's impact on the programme, see ERDİNÇ (2004: 121-126).

28. Erdinç writes that attempts were made to postpone the legislation of the programme and official notification, both of which were emasculated by what he called the Turkish «opium smuggling lobby». These acts were further disabled by Sherrill's diplomatic warnings and Mustafa Kemal's own authority exerted through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüştü Aras. See ERDİNÇ (2004: 126-132).

29. «Uyuşturucu maddeler inhisarı hakkında 1/699 numaralı kanun layihası ve Sıhhat ve İçtimai muavenet, İktisat ve Adliye encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/699 on the narcotic drugs monopoly and the minutes of the Councils of Health and Welfare, Economy and Justice)», (1933: 470).

30. Examples of the Turkish government's interventionist policies on agriculture during the etatist era include: tobacco which was taken over by the Monopoly permanently in 1930; the state-led Agricultural Bank began to purchase wheat directly from producers in 1932; and state-controlled agricultural sale cooperatives had a decisive impact on the prices of some export-oriented crops such as grapes and figs.

etatist priorities. The opium market today is still under total state control, unlike other agricultural sectors where the interventionist policies of the state were dismissed in time. Hence, the monopolisation of opium has less to do with economic trends than with the crop itself and how it is perceived.

In addition to the establishment of the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly, Law No. 2253 restricted opium cultivation. Informed by evaluations from the Ministry of Economy, it fell to the Ministry of Agriculture to determine the districts that would be allowed to cultivate opium. These districts were to be announced in the newspapers, and people would be informed by the local governing body, the council of elders in each district, especially in the prohibited regions. Since the prohibition was to be enforced by «all local governors», the law did not specify an executive body. Producers had to fill out a declaration form including the amount of opium per *dönüm* (about a quarter of an acre) and the location of their fields. After passing through the local governmental bodies, the declaration forms were centralized at the Monopoly offices³¹.

Regarding alkaloid-manufacturing, the law upheld the earlier 1931 and 1932 decrees and permanently shut down the three factories in Istanbul. A single factory under Monopoly control was to be established in Ankara to process prepared opium, but was never actually set up during that era.

Raw and prepared opium was to be exported and imported only through the Istanbul and Izmir customs. By an additional law enacted on 12 June 1933, traders were required to obtain permission certificates from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in order to export and import prepared opium³². In addition, opium could only be sold by pharmaceutical firms and pharmacists who owned drugstores. After shipment, the certificates had to be reported to the relevant authority of the importing country, which meant that the opium trade would involve double-entry book-keeping, at least in principle. Lastly, the penal law was changed on 8 June 1933³³ to make smuggling or illicit

31. «Uyuşturucu maddeler inhisarı hakkında 1/699 numaralı kanun layihası ve Sıhhat ve İçtimai muavenet, İktisat ve Adliye encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/699 on the narcotic drugs monopoly and the minutes of the Councils of Health and Welfare, Economy and Justice)», (1933: 468-471).

32. «Uyuşturucu maddelerin murakabesi hakkında 1/741 numaralı kanun layihası ve Sıhhat ve İçtimai muavenet, İktisat ve Adliye encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/741 on narcotic drugs control and the minutes of the Councils of Health and Welfare, Economy and Justice)», (1933: 215-218).

33. «Uyuşturucu maddelerin murakabesi hakkında 1/741 numaralı kanun layihası ve Sıhhat ve İçtimai muavenet, İktisat ve Adliye encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/741 on narcotic drugs control and the minutes of the Councils of Health and Welfare, Economy and Justice)», (1933: 84).

selling, buying or use of opium punishable with fines and imprisonment. The penalties would be heavier if the accused was a doctor, pharmacist, dentist or midwife. The law defined the individual user as a «patient» under treatment for at least six months in a hospital.

The new laws regulating all stages of the opium business were put into effect immediately. While this was welcomed by international actors such as Russell Pasha and representatives of the USA, it disheartened domestic opium merchants and producers. In the atmosphere of uncertainty that existed in 1933, complaints arose from different groups. Here, it is important to note that the bureaucrats appointed to the newly established monopoly sought to manage the transition process by compromising with the various actors involved, rather than forcing changes on them. A joint commission of the Ministries of Economy and Agriculture prepared a list of the cities allowed to produce opium, and announced it on 10 August 1933³⁴. The list was amended twice by the end of the year due to the reactions of the opium producers and the chambers of commerce³⁵. Moreover, in a meeting with representatives of merchants from Istanbul and Izmir, the Monopoly offered to guarantee purchase; it would be conditional, requiring the waiver of their rights to export opium for the first year. The offer was proposed to «protect the merchants' interests»³⁶, and the monopoly promised that it would give them a better price, allowing sales without competition and a search for new markets. The newspaper *Milliyet* stated that the merchants accepted this attractive commercial offer purely «on grounds of conscience»³⁷.

Although this conciliatory attitude towards the different actors defused the tension slightly in 1933, the opium problem worsened in the second half of the 1930s. The complexity surpassed the predictions of the Kemalist elites, who had primarily sought to disprove smuggling allegations by thoroughly regulating the opium market as proof of the new regime's strength. As legislation came into effect, Turkish elites entered a deadlock of economic and social necessities on the one hand, and conventional obligations on the other. The clash of these two priorities caused division among the Kemalist elites regarding how to govern the opium sector.

34. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/38.58..8.

35. Balıkesir and Manisa were added to the allowed-cities list in November and Aydın in December, 1933. With these additions, seventeen cities were allowed to produce opium. See Narcotic Drugs Monopoly (s.a.: 71).

36. «Afyon tacirleri davet edilecek», 17 November 1933, *Milliyet*.

37. «Afyon tacirleri toplandı», 3 December 1933, *Milliyet*.

5. THE «TIRESOME, HEAVY ATMOSPHERE»³⁸: A NEW PHASE FOR THE OPIUM SECTOR

As discussed above, the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly was founded immediately after the enactment of the Opium Law, and began operating with newly appointed officials in mid-June, 1933. However, problems in implementing the law worsened the economic conditions in the opium market. One of these problems was the Monopoly's lack of funding. Although the government had proposed 1.5 million liras for the Monopoly, this amount could not be raised. The Monopoly had to borrow three times that amount from banks between 1933 and 1935 just to raise the initial capital. On the 1935 balance sheet, the Monopoly's management cited the shortage of funds as a main impediment to carrying out its duties. They worked to increase operating income in order to prevent further borrowing³⁹.

Improving operating income and the quality of the core business proved to be a difficult endeavour. The Monopoly purchased raw opium from producers, standardised it according to morphine content, packaged it in wooden crates labelled with an official «Turkish Republic Narcotic Drugs Monopoly» sticker, and exported the product. However, it faced serious marketing difficulties in the first two years of operation, mainly due to on-going commercial disputes with the European opium manufacturing cartel. In the audit report of 1933 balance sheet of the Monopoly, the Monopoly managers accused the cartel of blocking negotiations and implementing a boycott policy. They argued that the cartel's real agenda was to weaken the Monopoly's structure within the country⁴⁰. Cartel and Monopoly ceased negotiations in 1934 due to commercial conflicts.

Some deputies in the parliament joined the Monopoly administration in voicing their displeasure with the European buyers. In the parliamentary meeting for the renewal of the opium agreement signed by Turkey and Yugoslavia in 1935, Berç Türker, a deputy from Afyonkarahisar, accused the cartel of paralysing Turkey's opium commerce. He declared that while the cartel thwarted Turkey, using a discourse of «serving humanity», its members were lining their own pockets⁴¹. This view was supported by Emin Sazak, the

38. This expression is from Berç Türker's parliamentary speech on 14 October 1935. See, «Afyonkarahisar sayısları Berç Türkerin afyon satışı hakkındaki şifahi sualine İktisad vekili Celal Bayarın cevabı» (1935: 74).

39. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/73.22..7.p. 3.

40. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/56.53..11., p. 2.

41. «Türkiye Cümhuriyet ile Yugoslavya Hükümeti arasında aktedilen afyon İtilafnamesinin tasdiki hakkında 1/591 numaralı kanun layihası ve Hariciye ve İktisad encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No

deputy from Eskişehir, and Rasih Kaplan, deputy of Antalya⁴². The criticisms were replied by Celal Bayar, the Minister of Economy and the government representative at that meeting. Bayar did not make satisfactory explanations to defend the government policy, but rather dismissed the criticism as outside the scope of the meeting⁴³. Despite domestic reactions against the cartel, Turkish economic officials made efforts to improve the Monopoly's relations with the cartel, so as to avoid losing its biggest buyer⁴⁴. Efforts to improve exports did not begin to bear fruit until 1936. Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of Turkish opium exports in those years, and shows the sharp decrease between 1933 and 1935.

Faced with financial difficulties and the inability to export to its biggest buyer, the Monopoly began searching for new markets. However, this was impeded by international convention restrictions, which the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare strongly supported. The Ministry of Economy's attempt to sell opium to Manchuria in 1934 provides an example of this conflict of interests⁴⁵. The 1931 Geneva Convention prohibited the export of opium to China. Manchuria, which was *de facto* separated from China, wanted to import opium for a factory it had established. The European powers found this unacceptable, and sought to remove this factory from market competition, according to a Turkish Ministry of Economy report from 1935⁴⁶. The Ministry of Economy declared that Turkey should oppose this ruling and export opium to Manchuria. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, however, argued for compliance with international conventions against selling excess stocks of opium and finding new markets. Manchuria requested 1,000 crates of opium in 1934 and 600 crates in 1935, but Turkey turned down the request. Manchuria instead purchased opium from Iran, which had no interest in complying with international conventions. The Manchuria case shows the power of the Ministry of

1/591 on the approval of the opium agreement signed between the Turkish Republic and Yugoslavia and the minutes of the Councils of Foreign Affairs and Economy», (1935: 137-138).

42. «Türkiye Cümhuriyet ile Yugoslavya Hükümeti arasında aktedilen afyon İtilafnamesinin tasdiki hakkında 1/591 numaralı kanun layihası ve Hariciye ve İktisaden cümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/591 on the approval of the opium agreement signed between the Turkish Republic and Yugoslavia and the minutes of the Councils of Foreign Affairs and Economy)», (1935:138-139).

43. «Türkiye Cümhuriyet ile Yugoslavya Hükümeti arasında aktedilen afyon İtilafnamesinin tasdiki hakkında 1/591 numaralı kanun layihası ve Hariciye ve İktisad encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/591 on the approval of the opium agreement signed between the Turkish Republic and Yugoslavia and the minutes of the Councils of Foreign Affairs and Economy)», (1935: 140).

44. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/46.50.17.

45. Following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Inner Manchuria was proclaimed as an independent state, Manchuria, by the Japanese.

46. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/179.230..8. This document is an important report of the inter-ministerial commission established to address the opium problem in 1935.

Health in the opium question. In the Assembly, Emin Sazak, one of the deputies critical of this policy, argued that the Ministry of Economy should have been fully authorised to decide about the opium question because the Ministry of Health, with its «almost humanitarian and prophet-like spirit», had caused losses of at least two or three million Turkish liras⁴⁷.

FIGURE 2
Turkey's opium exports, 1923 - 1945



Source: İstatistik Yıllığı 1936-1937 (1937: 240); İstatistik Yıllığı 1942-1945 (1946: 379)⁴⁸.

By 1935 there was increasing unrest among the Turkish ruling elites regarding governance of the opium problem, as economic and political necessities challenged medical discourse and conventional obligations. The economic arguments were voiced by the Monopoly, the Ministry of Economy, and deputies from opium producing cities. The government itself was uneasy with the contentious and conflicting politics resulting from the new legislation. An inter-ministerial commission was proposed by the Ministry of Economy and

47. «Türkiye Cumhuriyet ile Yugoslavya Hükümeti arasında aktedilen afyon İtilafnamesinin tasdiki hakkında 1/591 numaralı kanun layihası ve Hariciye ve İktisad encümenleri mazbataları (Draft bill No 1/591 on the approval of the opium agreement signed between the Turkish Republic and Yugoslavia and the minutes of the Councils of Foreign Affairs and Economy)», (1935: 138).

48. I gathered the data from the government statistical yearbooks of the Public Directorate of Statistics (*İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü*).

formed on 17 May 1935, to discuss «the difficult situation of opium's domestic and foreign trade, and significant issues affecting the Monopoly's existence and continuity»⁴⁹. The commission was comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Economy, Finance, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, and Health and Social Welfare. In its report, it cited the «cartel's causeless boycott policy and excess opium stocks in the hands of the Monopoly» as the main reasons for the on-going difficulties in the opium market. To compete with the cartel, the commission urged the Monopoly to establish an opiate factory in Ankara as prescribed by the 1933 laws. Stronger restrictions on opium production were also suggested to reduce the opium stockpile. The commission also criticised the Opium Committee of the League of Nations for what they called «prejudiced policies» against Turkey. To overcome those biases, the report underscored the urgency of defending Turkey's rights before the Opium Committee.

As a final point in its comprehensive evaluation, the inter-ministerial commission called for a consensus among the ruling elites. Aware of the conflicting political differences preventing a consensus, it addressed the Ministry of Health as the principal body on the opium question, stating that:

*The agricultural, economic and commercial necessities may conflict with medical and conventional ones in opium commerce. However, the government's declared policy is to give preference to medical and conventional necessity in these conflicts because the Ministry of Health is responsible for implementing medical and conventional provisions*⁵⁰.

The 1935 report of the inter-ministerial commission reinforced the decisive position of the Ministry of Health regarding the opium problem. The Ministry's dominant position had both ideological and political effects on the evolution of the opium issue up until World War II. Medical discourse on opium flexed its ideological muscle in successive congresses and conferences on «toxicomania», or drug abuse. The Sixth National Turkish Medical Congress in 1935 was actually dedicated to «toxicomania with poisons other than alcohol». The Congress defined opium, morphine, cocaine, heroin, hemp, and tobacco as poisons and claimed that their use had become a social threat (Şakir, 1935). Medical symptoms, treatment, and the struggle against these substances were addressed and doctors were assigned the task of strengthening the government's administrative measures and warning the public, especially youth and children.

49. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/179.230..8.Appendix I, *Alakalı Vekâletlerle Komisyonunda dilekler*, p. 9.

50. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/179.230..8.Appendix.

The Turkish medical elites developed an agenda for turning public opinion against these «poisons» in the 1935 Congress. They spearheaded the propaganda against opium addiction through newspaper articles, pamphlets, and books⁵¹. Dr. Akil Muhtar Özden, one of the most prominent Turkish doctors, organized a youth-oriented conference at the Istanbul Faculty of Medicine, the only medical school in Turkey at that time. He described the conference, held on 4 March 1937, as an «invitation to all prospective doctors to join the struggle against the social and human disaster of toxicomania» (Özden, 1937: 1). The common characteristic of propaganda efforts was the inevitability and necessity of Turkish opium policy, even if this meant certain economic losses.

The Ministry of Health, with its authority and dominance re-validated by the inter-ministerial commission, asserted its power through scathing criticisms of other actors who called for more flexible reading of the laws, to favour economic concerns. On 11 May 1936, the Ministry of Health published a review of the previous three years⁵². Citing conventional obligations, the Ministry severely criticised the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly for its commercial decisions, its method of determining production restriction, and its opium standardisation criterion. It accused the Monopoly of making market-oriented decisions that might «bring short-term and artificial benefits but in the long run might lead to considerable material and moral losses». The report emphasised the need to develop a «rational technique» for restricting production, which was seen as the «essence of the opium problem». At the end of the report, the Ministry even questioned whether the Monopoly was an adequate structure for the opium sector, just three years after it was hailed as the best solution.

During the era leading up to World War II, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare went beyond criticism. It sought to block any policy proposals aimed at even minimally revising strict compliance with international conventions. The Joint Central Office of Turkey and Yugoslavia for Opium Sale prepared a memorandum on 26 November 1936 that would facilitate joint action by the two countries in addressing the opium problem⁵³. The memorandum consisted of nine demands that voiced the rights of the producer countries. These included requiring that countries that had ratified the Geneva Convention only imported opium from producer countries that had also ratified the convention; or not allowing new countries to produce opium. The Ministry of Health responded harshly to this memorandum and questioned the legitimacy of the Joint Sale Office. It did not approve

51. For some examples, see RAGIP (11 October 1933: 6; 17 October 1933: 6). The «Heroinomani» section of *Afyon: Türkiye’de ve Dünyada* was written by Dr. Ahmet Şükrü Bey who was the neuropathology expert at Cerrahpaşa Hospital. See Narcotic Drugs Monopoly (s.a.:19-24).

52. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.230..10. p. 21-41.

53. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..1.

of voicing 'suspicious views' towards foreign bodies. As an explanation, the Ministry of Economy replied that the memorandum had been prepared at the insistence of Yugoslavia's Prime Minister, Milan Stoyadinovich. The reply attempted to persuade the Ministry of Health that the memorandum «aimed to ensure a new benefit for the millions of opium producers who were really in a very difficult situation»⁵⁴. Moreover, the Ministry of Economy proposed that the two countries should jointly defend the memorandum before the Opium Committee of the League of Nations. Despite urgent economic warnings, the Ministry of Health did not allow presentation of the memorandum even to the Turkish Cabinet, claiming that its demands were «unenforceable and did not take into account the laws» and that the «opium problem was not a national, but an international issue»⁵⁵.

Domestic opposition to a more flexible application of the international conventions prevented any attempts to favour economic concerns. However, Turkish elites decided to launch a more active policy in 1938. The policy revision was triggered by two international developments: the League of Nations' plans to hold a conference on the restriction of opium production and the 1938 visit of Mr. Eric Extrand, Director of the Welfare Affairs and Opium Branch of the League of Nations, to Turkey. To address the first concern, Turkish elites sought to postpone the conference or persuade the League of Nations to hold a preliminary conference for opium producer countries. If these were unsuccessful, they would discuss an alternative policy for «gaining concessions» from the production restriction. Turkish foreign officials were to defend two points before the League of Nations: Turkey's authorisation to produce the maximum percentage of legal production amount, and compulsory production restriction on all producer countries, including Iran⁵⁶. Mr. Extrand's visit was seen as a trigger for these interests and an opportunity to *negotiate Turkey's rightful demands as a result of its altruism and commitment to the conventions, and to present the Turkish point of view supported by irrefutable evidence*⁵⁷.

In the midst of preparations for these international negotiations, legislation was enacted in 1938 that shut the Narcotic Drugs Monopoly down and replaced it with the new Soil Products Office (*Toprak Mahsulleri Ofisi*) on 24 June 1938⁵⁸. The Monopoly had only survived for five years under financial pressure, excess stock problems, marketing failures, and the Ministry of Health's opposition to its market-oriented actions. As Erdinç

54. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..1.

55. PMRA Catalogue of General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..1.

56. PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.230..11.

57. PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..1.

58. «Toprak mahsulleri ofisi kanunu layihası ve İktisad, Ziraat, Maliye ve Bütçe encümenleri mazbataları (1/1038) (Draft bill No 1/1038 on the Soil Products Office and the minutes of the Councils of Economy, Agriculture, Treasury and Budget)», (1938: 310-318).

mentioned, corruption allegations also influenced the replacement of the Monopoly with the Soil Products Office (Erdoğan, 2004: 141).

Parliamentary discussion on the law again revealed the on-going and growing tension among Turkish political elites. In the debate, deputies representing opium producing cities expressed their criticisms and dissenting opinions. Rasih Kaplan, a deputy from Antalya, argued that Turkey alone had «undertaken all the trouble of rescuing humanity»; while no other country had done anything to address opium problem⁵⁹. The Minister of Economy, Şakir Kesebir, echoed Kaplan's argument, declaring that no other consumer or producer country besides Turkey had adhered to the international conventions. To appease the dissenters, Kesebir discussed the policy revisions that the government planned to negotiate with the Opium Commission of the League of Nations, and expressed hopeful expectations regarding diplomatic efforts. The dissenting deputies were less optimistic. Rasih Kaplan proposed the abolition of the international conventions unilaterally implemented by Turkey, and was supported by Emin Sazak, deputy from Eskişehir; Berç Türker, deputy from Afyonkarahisar; and Dr. Osman Şevki Uludağ, deputy from Konya.

The proposer deputies were the same who had been criticizing the government and especially the Ministry of Health policies since 1933. This was because the deputies from opium producing cities were voicing the general dissidence among producers from the changing policies. The opium producers had complained about the Monopoly's new and utterly problematic purchasing system that imposed a short purchasing period, causing unsold opium to accumulate in the hands of producers. It created a cash deficit for producers due to the implementation of an initial payment system based on expert estimates of morphine content. In addition to the problems generated by the Monopoly's purchasing system, producers also suffered from production prohibitions, declining opium prices, and failure of the new regime to eliminate agricultural intermediaries. Despite limited political participation channels in the early Republican Era, producers continued to forward their complaints and demands to the government through election district reports and inspection district reports written by deputies, or local party congresses⁶⁰. Political crit-

59. «Toprak mahsulleri ofisi kanunu layihası ve İktisad, Ziraat, Maliye ve Bütçe encümenleri mazbataları (1/1038) (Draft bill No 1/1038 on the Soil Products Office and the minutes of the Councils of Economy, Agriculture, Treasury and Budget)», (1938: 311).

60. For more on the impact of changing opium policies on rural society and the producers' responses to those changes, see GÜRSOY (2007: 117-152). Small-scale family holdings were historically dominant in Turkish opium production, despite the existence of large-scale farmers and tenants. In this text, «producers» generally refer to the family smallholdings of opium growers. However, the political responses of producers are not easily classified according to land ownership patterns in the early republican context. Growers were deprived of organized interest group activity and historical primary or secondary sources are insufficient.

icism and opposition by the deputies was a reflection of discontent in rural society over changing opium policies.

The 1938 proposal to abolish the international conventions was the first well-defined opposition stand against the 1933 legislation. It was important enough to merit response from the Prime Minister, Celal Bayar. In a long speech, Bayar acknowledged the *unfortunate reality that Turkey was left alone in the implementation of the international conventions*; but he held that their abolition was not the solution. He promoted the government agenda for more influential representation before the League of Nations, aimed at securing the necessary policy changes in favour of Turkey. Bayar emphasised that Turkey should never have been accused of smuggling, and the adoption of the conventions in 1933 had eliminated those accusations. Hence, the government needed to keep negotiations alive, with its new vision and call for policy revision. Bayar managed to persuade the opposition, who dropped their proposal to abolish the international conventions. At the end of the debates, the new legislation for the Soil Products Office was accepted by Parliament⁶¹.

The process of preparation for negotiations with the League of Nations had modified Turkish priorities and policies on opium. Slowly, the political balance began to shift in favour of economic and agricultural priorities over medical and conventional ones. After discussion of the issue in the inter-ministerial commission formed in 1938, Turkey completed its programme for international negotiations in 1939. The centrepiece of the programme was Turkish opposition to conventional restrictions on opium production. Upholding the sovereignty of producer states over their own agricultural production, international control of exports was proposed rather than eradication of production. Opium production should be banned in countries that had begun cultivation after 1925, the year of the first international convention on opium. Also, all producer states should participate fully in the international conference on opium production restriction⁶².

Regarding the control of opium exports, the Turkish programme proposed a quota regime proportional to the export share of each country. The system would favour Turkey since Turkish exports constituted more than 65 per cent of legal international opium trade⁶³. Furthermore, importing countries that had ratified the international

61. «Toprak mahsulleri ofisi kanunu layihası ve İktisad, Ziraat, Maliye ve Bütçe encümenleri mazbataları (1/1038) (Draft bill No 1/1038 on the Soil Products Office and the minutes of the Councils of Economy, Agriculture, Treasury and Budget)», (1938: 314-315).

62. PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..3.p. 2.

63. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/87.42..10.p. 6. This document mentions the worldwide statistics collected by the Opium Committee of the League of Nations.

conventions should be required to only purchase opium from producer countries that had ratified the conventions⁶⁴. Finally, Turkey proposed mandatory destruction of confiscated opium⁶⁵.

The Turkish committee consisted of three representatives who would defend these proposals as the country's official position and programme in negotiations with the Opium Commission in the spring of 1939. These representatives were: Necmettin Sadak, permanent representative of Turkey on the Opium Commission of the League of Nations; Servet Berk, the organisational manager of the Ministry of Economy; and Hamza Osman, the general manager of the former Monopoly and parliamentary deputy from Afyonkarahisar. The content of the 1939 programme shows the change in the balance of power among the Turkish elites, contrary to the programme claim that Turkey had been defending these views from the beginning⁶⁶. While the Ministry of Health had not approved the presentation of similar proposals even to the Turkish cabinet only three years before, their revised versions became Turkish official point of view in the international negotiations in 1939. Though the negotiations never took place, Turkey's new position was fully operational at the outbreak of World War II.

The onset of global conflict opened another phase in Turkey's long-lasting opium problem. The increasing demand for morphine production, and erosion of the international conventions and regulations gave the Turkish ruling elites a window of opportunity for radical policy change. In May 1940, the government returned all confiscated industrial materials and the equipment used in the manufacture of prepared opium to the owners of the ETKIM factory⁶⁷. The opium trade also enjoyed a worldwide relaxation of restrictions. Germany was Turkey's main trading partner during the war era; opium was sold to Germany in return for atebirin and prokinin, with trade quotas increasing until 1943⁶⁸.

64. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/87.42..10.p.7. and PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..3. p. 3.

65. PMRA Catalogue of the General Directorate of Transactions, 030.10/178.231..3.p. 3.and PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/87.42..10. p. 7.

66. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/87.42..10.p. 4.

67. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/71.53..14.

68. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/101.28..1.Atebirin and prokinin were synthetic drugs used for the treatment of malaria. Opium in return for atebirin was legislated in 1942 following the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two countries. Trade for prokinin was legislated in 1943. For this process, see PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/99.63..4.; PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/99.73..11.;

Turkey added new cultivation districts to its 1941 list: Göynük, in Bolu; Ürgüp, in Kayseri for opium poppy and seed; and five districts in Manisa for poppy oil production⁶⁹. Under war conditions, Turkey began to implement the opium laws in a more flexible manner as medical and conventional priorities faded in a war economy.

6. CONCLUSION

This account of opium politics in early republican Turkey provides new insights into the international reconstruction of opium regime by the twentieth century and the differences among Turkish ruling elites on how to govern. Examination of the Turkish experience contributes to historiography on narcotics in general, and opium in particular. This article focuses on the period of first restrictive legislation, which has received little attention in the historical account of Turkish opium, and the contentious politics involved in formulating and applying the laws. Consequently, it enables us to question the prevailing epistemological assumptions of absolute dominance and homogeneity among the governing elites in early republican historiography.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the mentality behind opium policies radically shifted towards restriction and selective prohibition, resulting in binding international conventions on opium. Turkey was both a traditional and leading opium producing and exporting country, so the young republic was directly affected by the new opium regime. In 1931-2, the government faced intense political pressure from the League of Nations and the USA to adopt the international opium conventions. Moreover, economic conditions in the opium market were deteriorating due to the Great Depression and commercial disputes with Turkey's traditional buyers. Accusations of illegal trafficking and «narcotizing» other nations, along with the economic hardships in the opium market led Turkey to enact new laws in 1933.

Though the new legislation defused the international pressure on the young Republic, its application led to divisions among Turkish ruling elites. The Ministry of Health

PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/101.15..2.; and PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/101.24..11.

69. PMRA Catalogues of Council of Ministers' Decrees (1928 and afterwards), 30..18.1.2/112.78..9. The cultivation allowance specifically given to these districts is essential for demonstrating the impact of peasant demands that were forwarded to the deputies during the 1930s. For a more detailed discussion on the relation between the cultivation allowances and producer reactions, see GÜRSOY (2007: 143-145).

strongly supported and acted as guardian of total adherence to conventional obligations. The sacrifice of economic well-being for the sake of «humanity» was disputed mainly by elites represented by the Ministry of Economy, who sought a more flexible reading of the regulations. Contrary to conventional Turkish historiography, which perceives the Kemalist state elites as a homogenous and non-conflictive entity, this article argues that the opium problem created a great deal of dissidence and controversy among Turkish ruling elites, who struggled over opium policy-making during the interwar era.

World War II changed the political balance among the Turkish elites and the entire international opium regime. As conventional regulatory frameworks collapsed and opium demand increased due to the conflict, Turkish state elites relaxed their strict compliance with international restrictions on opium production, trade, and manufacture. This brought about a spontaneous solution to the opium problem that had divided Turkish governing elites with divergent policy priorities in the 1930s.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the three anonymous reviewers of *Historia Agraria*, and the participants of the «Rural History and World History» session of the 9th European Social Science History Conference - Glasgow. Thanks also to Kathryn Kranzler, Cengiz Kırılı, Alp Yücel Kaya and Taylan Yenilmez for their helpful comments and advice.

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