

THE ARMENIAN DEMANDS AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE OF 1919*

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Abstract:

During the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the representative of the Ottoman Armenians, Boghos Nubar Pasha and the representative of the Armenian Republic, Avetis Aharonian put forward territorial claims against the Ottoman Empire and provided information regarding the Armenian population. Alongside shedding light on the Armenian population, this article analyzes, by way of providing maps, the territorial claims advanced by the Armenians, the territories the English and French contemplated on granting Armenia and the territorial claims set forth by the French delegation.

Key Words: *Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Armenian territorial claims, the Armenian population, Boghos Nubar Pasha, Avetis Aharonian.*

Öz:

1919 Paris Barış Konferansı'na Osmanlı Ermenilerini temsilen katılan Boghos Nubar Paşa ile Ermenistan Cumhuriyetini temsilen katılan Avetis Ahoranyan yaptıkları konuşmalarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan toprak talebinde bulunmuşlar ve ayrıca Ermeni Nüfusu hakkında bilgi vermişlerdir. Yazıda Ermenilerin toprak talepleri, İngiliz ve Fransızların Ermenistan'a verilmesini düşündükleri topraklar ve Fransızların toprak talepleri, haritalarda gösterilmek suretiyle incelemekte ayrıca Doğu Anadolu'daki Ermeni nüfusu hakkında bazı bilgiler verilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *1919 Paris Barış Konferansı, Ermenilerin toprak talepleri, Ermeni nüfusu, Boghos Nubar Paşa, Avetis Ahoranyan.*

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At the Paris Peace Conference which convened in Paris to establish a new world order in the aftermath of World War I, the demands of several states' representatives were set forth.

Both Boghos Nubar Pasha, the representative of the Ottoman Armenians and Avetis Aharonian, the representative of the Armenian Republic situated in the Caucasus, delivered speeches at the Council of Ten of the Paris Peace Conference on February 26, 1919. These speeches are to be found in the Documents section of this journal.

Boghos Nubar Pasha (1825-1899) was an Egyptian statesman, son of the first Prime Minister of modern Egypt Nubar Nubarian, and one-time director of the Egyptian Railways. In the wake of the Balkan Wars in 1912, Boghos Nubar Pasha, a wealthy and cosmopolitan individual, was appointed by the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, Kevork V as special representative to Europe to discuss the issues of instituting reforms in the "Armenian Provinces"¹ of the Ottoman Empire. From this point onwards, Boghos Nubar Pasha began to conduct himself as the permanent representative of the Ottoman Armenians. Furthermore, he was instrumental in the establishment of the French "Legion d'Orient". As is well known, this military unit took part in the hostilities in Palestine and Syria, and following the war occupied a part of Eastern Anatolia under the flag of France.

On the other hand, Avetis Aharonian was a writer and a member of the Dashnak Party. In 1918 he assumed the chairmanship of the Armenian National Council for some time and conducted the ceasefire negotiations in Istanbul under this title. Designated as the representative to the Paris Peace Conference by the Armenian Government, Aharonian, traveling from Yerevan arrived at Paris in approximately two months. The main reason behind this was that the English officials hesitated to issue a visa for Aharonian as the representative of the Armenian Government. For a while the English were reluctant to recognize the independence of Armenia and engage in diplomatic contacts as this may have entailed the disintegration of Russia at a time when Tsarist forces were rebelling against Communist rule.

At the Council of Ten the first speech was delivered by Aharonian. After elabo-

1 Employed frequently during this period in the US and European press, the expression "Armenian Provinces" refers to the Six Provinces in which the Armenians allegedly constituted a majority. In reality, however, they constituted a minority in these provinces comprised of Erzurum, Van, Sivas, Mamuret-ul Aziz (Malatya) and Diyarbakır.

rating on how the Armenians sided with the Allied Powers during the war and emphasizing that the Republic of Armenia was established in accordance with regular procedure, he made two demands. The first was the recognition of the Armenian State. Aharonian expressed this demand by requesting that they be accepted as a delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. The second demand was the union of the Armenian Republic and the so-called “Armenian Provinces”.

Bogos Nubar Pasha’s speech was much longer than that made by Aharonian. By way of referring to the Légion d’Orient he also expressed how the Armenians joined forces with the Allied Powers and he mentioned how the Armenians fought within the French Légion Etrangère. Furthermore, he alleged that one of the motives behind “the massacre and deportation” of the Armenians was their attachment to the cause of the Entente Powers, emphasized that the Armenians were the “belligerent side” and set forth how the “the tribute of life paid by Armenia is heavier than that of any other belligerent nation”. Moreover, Boghos Nubar Pasha dwelled on the borders of the to-be established Armenian State and touched upon the territories he wanted to be granted to Armenia by making references to relevant population distributions.

On the issue of what Boghos Nubar Pasha demanded, this can be summarized as him having requested that certain territories belonging to the Ottoman Empire be annexed to and placed under the mandate of the Armenian State.

Of the topics raised by both Armenian representatives, beyond doubt the most important was that concerning the territories of the Ottoman Empire they wanted to be handed over to Armenia. They sought support for these demands by way of providing for information on the population of the Armenians. These two issues shall be the subject matter of the following analysis.

The Territories Demanded From The Ottoman Empire

It should be stipulated that there exists differences between the Armenian Republic and Boghos Nubar Pasha regarding the territories demanded from the Ottoman Empire.

Before Aharonian parted from Yerevan he received orders from the Armenian “Horhunt” (which at the time assumed the role of Parliament), to demand the Six Provinces and an outlet to the Black Sea. However, at Paris he espoused Bog-

hos Nubar Pasha's views as to which territories would be requested² and in this manner it became possible for both Armenian delegates present at the Conference to make the same demands.

By expressing how "the Caucasian Armenians ardently desire reunion of the [Armenian] Republic with the Armenian provinces of Turkey", Aharonian made it clear that the territories particularly longed for were the Six Provinces. However, there remained a degree of uncertainty regarding Cilicia which Boghos Nubar Pasha adamantly demanded during his speech. In conjunction with this issue he mentioned that "both sections of Armenia represent a single geographic and economic whole, extending from Lori and Borchalu in the north down to the Mediterranean and, in the south, to the Armenian Taurus". These words seem to imply that certain territories apart from the Six Provinces were desired, and that these lands correspond to the area stretching all the way to the Mediterranean and the Taurus Mountains. However, practically speaking, this is not possible as the Mediterranean is situated to the south of the Tauruses.

Aharonian was split between his desire to abide by the orders from Yerevan, and his desire to appear before the Allies as a single Armenian delegation whereby he supported Boghos Nubar Pasha. This dilemma caused Aharonian to be ambiguous in his references. He uses the term Mediterranean in order to please Boghos Nubar Pasha and refers to the Taurus (and not the Mediterranean lying beyond the Taurus) as the limit of the territorial claims in order to remain faithful to the instructions issued by Yerevan. The fact that Aharonian did not use the term Cilicia further strengthens this argument.

Boghos Nubar Pasha begins his territorial claims with Cilicia. Cilicia is a geographic term that was used by the Romans. It lies between the Taurus and the Mediterranean and extends almost to Anamur in the west and Iskenderun to the east. The Ottoman Empire did not have an administrative unit designated as Cilicia.

Boghos Nubar Pasha, in addition to Cilicia, also demanded the Marash Sandjak. As such he aimed to join Cilicia with the Six "Armenian" Provinces ultimately creating a unitary Armenian body.

- 2 Anahide Ter Minassian, *La République d'Arménie*, Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1989, pp.158-159; Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic Of Armenia*, Volume1, Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1974, pp. 259-260; Claire Mouradian, *L'Arménie*, Paris: Que saia-je, 1995, p.71.

Boghos Nubar Pasha's other claims included the Erzurum, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Harput (Mamuret-ul Aziz) and Sivas provinces; i.e. the six "Armenian" provinces.

His final demand was a strip of the Trabzon province in order to access the Black Sea³.

Later in his speech, Boghos Nubar Pasha would relinquish some of these claims; by announcing that he conceded that the south of Hakkari and Diyarbakir were Kurdish lands and that the west of Sivas was Turkish. This 'generous' act was most probably designed to further convince other delegations present that only Armenian lands were claimed.

A map denoting Boghos Nubar Pasha's claims is provided following the text (see Map I)⁴. These lands as calculated by our Institute corresponds to 387.424 km squared⁵.

During World War I agreements⁶ concerning the partition of the Ottoman Empire among the Allies there exists no reference to the allocation of some Ottoman lands to Armenia. When Tsarist Russia was ousted the possibility of transferring the land deigned to be handed to Russia to Armenia became possible. On this issue both the United States and the United Kingdom started to make arrangements before the I World Wars end.

3 Boghos Nubar Pasha in speech whilst pretending that most of the residents of Trabzon were of Greek origin, maintained that this was the only outlet to the Black Sea available to Armenia. He also mentioned that Greek President Venizelos had already shown an exceptional sentiment of fairness by conceding this territory to Armenia. President Venizelos had spoken at the Council of Ten of the Peace Conference on the 3rd and 4th of February 1919. Upon a question posed by US President W. Wilson he stated that although there was a proposal to create a Republic in the Trabzon province he did not endorse it. He believed that the formation of many small republics in the area was unnecessary and thus coupled with the fact that Trabzon was surrounded by Turks he endorsed the inclusion of Trabzon into Armenia. (Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. Paris Peace Conference 1919, Volume IV, United States Government Printing Office, 1948, pp. 872,873.

4 All maps provided in supplement to this text were drafted and all surface areas have been calculated by Pınar Güven.

5 Boghos Nubar Pasha's first claim did not include Kayseri and its surroundings thus the total was 369,955 km squared. One year later however, in 1920, the map presented by the Armenian delegation at the conference included Kayseri to the territorial claims made. Thus, the total requested land reached 387.424 km squared. The claims of 1920 can be found in Anita L.P. Burdett, *Der., Armenia Political and Ethnic Boundaries 1817-1940*, Chipnham, Wilts: Archive Editions, 1998. Map depicting proposed limits of Armenia c. 1920. Delegation Nationale Armenienne.

6 The agreements in question: Agreements on Istanbul and the Straits 18 March 1915, Treaty of London 26 April 1915, Sykes - Picot Agreement 16 May 1916 and the St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement 17 April 1917.

At this point US public opinion and the US government had been convinced that the Ottoman Empire was subjecting the Armenians to cruelty and were massacring them. This opinion was greatly influenced by the efforts of American missionaries in Anatolia. During this time The United States Inquiry, an organization of specialists working acting on a directive issued by the President, worked to offer suggestions vis-a-vis post-war territorial arrangements and other relevant issues. The specialists involved were also influenced by the above mentioned sentiment, thus they wanted to at least grant Armenia autonomy after the end of the war and had begun work on deciding which territories would be taken from the Ottoman Empire and given to Armenia. By the 21st of January 1919 the suggestion of creating a nation carrying the name Armenia and having it function under the mandate of a larger state working on behalf of the League of Nations was among the propositions presented to President Wilson at the time. These propositions also stipulated the amount of land to be given to Armenia. These lands are greatly proportional to the claims made by Boghos Nubar Pasha. However, by including Kayseri and the Ahaltsh region located in the Caucasus to the land to be allotted to Armenia, these proposals had even surpassed the claims of Boghos Nubar Pasha⁷. Our Institute has calculated the total amount of land conceded under the US plan as 390.318 km².

In the United Kingdom the general sentiment was also pro-Armenian and anti-Ottoman. The fact that the Ottomans had sided with the Germans during WW I has compounded this sentiment. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George mentioned in his memoirs that if the inhumane empire (referring to the Ottomans) is defeated one of the requirements of victory would be to save the Armenian valleys from the heinous stains inflicted upon them by the Turks and their bloody and evil rule⁸.

An extensive British plan to hand over Ottoman lands to Armenia which had been deemed to function under the mandate of a larger state was included in a diplomatic note on 7th February 1919. The borders of this Armenian state were denoted as such: the border in the south running along the Iskenderun-Diyarbakir line continuing along the Euphrates and joining with the Iranian border and another line running on the north from a point between Trabzon and Surmene taking in the coastline of the Black Sea on the west and the Mersin-Sivas line.

7 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, pp.263-265.

8 David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, Volume 2, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1983, p. 496.

This plan however, although creating an Armenia that reached from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea was actually comprised of less land than the claim of Boghos Nubar Pasha and the American proposition. According to calculations made by our institute the amount of land proposed by the British to be given to Armenia was 226.644 km². According to the British plan Karabagh was not granted to Armenia but a proposition to exchange the Muslim populations of the Russian Yerevan Guberniia province and Karabagh was presented⁹.

The lands to be conceded to Armenia by the US, the British and those claimed by Boghos Nubar Pasha are presented in Map II¹⁰.

During this time in France there existed no objection to the creation of an independent Armenian state. However, in the 1916 Sykes – Picot Agreement Ottoman lands conceded to France and the land claimed by Boghos Nubar Pasha overlap in the Adana, Sivas, Mamuret-ul Aziz, and Diyarbekir provinces. At these points of convergence the French and Armenian claims conflicted. Map III depicts the claims of the French and Boghos Nubar Pasha.

The French-Armenian disagreement revolves around Cilicia. France tried to incorporate Cilicia to the territory of Syria the mandate of which it was to assume. Shukri Ganem the head representative of The Syrian Commission, formed to protect the interests of Syria, at the Council of Ten on the 13th of February 1919 had relayed that Syria had well defined borders within the Taurus, the Sinai Desert, and the Mediterranean¹¹. When the Taurus is defined as a border Cilicia is included within the territory of Syria. Based on this Boghos Nubar Pasha stated that by including a large portion of Cilicia within their geographic borders the Syrians were advancing baseless territorial claims and further went on to state that Syria's borders are not defined by the Tauruses but the Amanos mountain range.

The Armenian Population

Both Aharonian and Boghos Nubar Pasha included information in their speeches about the Armenian population. Boghos Nubar Pasha further elaborated on the losses incurred by the Armenians during the war.

Aharonian maintained that there were 2 million Armenians in the Caucasus.

9 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, pp.265-272.

10 Based on map found in Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, p.274.

11 Paper Relating to Foreign Relations..., p.1025.

The 400 to 500 thousand refugees from the Ottoman Empire are included in this number.

Boghos Nubar Pasha however, claims that there were 4.5 million Armenians in the world before the war and that 2 million of these Armenians resided within the Ottoman Empire. He states that more than 1 million Armenians were killed during the war. While he later refrained from presenting further figures on the matter, he did present, as a justification for the extensive lands he was requesting, some claims. A summarization of the rather complicated claims is as flows:

- The Turkish (Ottoman) Government tampered with the census records to make the Armenian population appear to be less than what it was.
- The Armenian population was greater than that of the Turks before the war.
- The belief that after the massacre during the war and after the deportation there were few to no Armenians left residing in the Ottoman Empire was false.
- Those killed in war must be counted along with the living.
- 2.5 million Turks were lost during the war and that half of these losses were incurred in the Armenian provinces thus proving that the Armenians are still in majority.
- After the war the Armenians will outnumber not only the Turks, but the Kurds and Turks together.
- If the Armenians of the Caucasus unite the Armenian majority will increase even further.

Ottoman statistics encompass all of the peoples that comprise the State. With this in mind it is meaningless to assume that these statistics were distorted for the Armenian population. Also the three examples presented in support of this claim by Boghos Nubar Pasha are inconsistent¹².

There is no existing source that verifies the claim that there were more Armenians than Turks in the mentioned territories after the war. Of the existing sources only the Armenian Patriarchate's statistics, which are known to be the highest estimate of the Armenian population of that time, denote the total Arme-

12 Boghos Nubar Pasha claimed that the Turkish Government declared 80,000 Armenians in the Van province. The number presented by McCarthy is 130,500; See: *The Population of Ottoman Armenians, The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ankara, TTK, p.70. The Marash Sandjak and the village of Zeytun are small areas in which the resident Armenian population could not possibly be a serious addition to the overall population.

nian population in the Six Provinces to be 39% of the total population of those six provinces¹³. In other words the claim made by Boghos Nubar Pasha is not authenticated by the statistics recorded by the Armenian Patriarchate.

In the territories demanded by Boghos Nubar Pasha the Armenian population is stipulated as such in 1912 before the war¹⁴:

Province	Armenian Population	% of Total Population
Erzurum	163,218	16.8
Bitlis	191,156	31.3
Mamuret-ul Aziz	111,043	16.3
Diyarbakir	89,131	11.8
Van	130,500	15.6
Sivas	182,912	12.4
Total Population of the Six Provinces	867,960	17.3
Adana	74,930	11.2
Trabzon	63,326	4.5
Total	1,006,216	14.02

As can be seen during this period the Armenian population in the Six Provinces comprised 17.3% of the total population. With the addition of Adana and Trabzon to these provinces, the total territory approximately equals the land claimed by Boghos Nubar Pasha. The Armenian population here is even lower totaling 14.02%.

It should be noted that serious Armenian contributors to this field concur that the Armenians did not constitute a majority in the Six Provinces or in any other province of the Ottoman Empire¹⁵.

It seems that the sole aim of Boghos Nubar Pasha was to convince the Council of Ten that there was or that there would be an Armenian majority in Anatolia after the war. He goes about his argument by stating that while many Turks died

¹³ Justin McCarthy, *The Population of...*, p.67.

¹⁴ Based on table found in Justin McCarthy, *The Population of...*, p.70.

¹⁵ Ronalds Grigor Suny, *Looking Towards Ararat, Armenia in Modern History*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 128,129, Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, pp.265, Anahide Ter Minassian, *La Republique d'Armenie...*, p.160.

in the war, in contrast, despite the deportation and massacres a fairly large population of Armenians (he does not reveal an exact number) remained in Anatolia. He further suggests that the deceased Armenians be counted along side the living; according to this logic the deceased would be counted as if they had never died. Thus the Armenians, in keeping with the belief that they comprised a majority in comparison to the Turks before the war, would also constitute a majority after the war. The warped logic behind requesting the dead be counted along side the living requires little explanation. It should be added that, as mentioned above, the Armenians residing in the lands requested by Boghos Nubar Pasha before the war having constituted 14.02% of the population would still not create a majority in any sense by counting the dead after the war.

There happens to be information relayed by the Armenian delegations in reference to Armenian losses in their speeches at the Peace Conference.

Before analyzing this issue a moment must be taken to define the concept of 'losses'. The Armenian Diaspora regards those killed during the Armenian relocation as 'losses'. However, this definition of the term 'losses' disregards deaths that can be attributed to natural causes as experienced during the relocation. These deaths can be attributed to old age, malnutrition, epidemics, lack of sufficient health care, and accidents. These deaths cannot be placed in the same category as those that were caused by acts of violence, thus, defining all of these deaths as 'losses' is misleading.

While Aharonian speaks of the sacrifices of the Armenians during the war he refrains from presenting direct evidence on Armenian losses. However, it is possible to calculate the losses incurred by the Armenians residing in the Caucasus from the numbers he does present. According to Aharonian the population of the Armenians residing in the Caucasus was 2 million prior to and after WW I. The Armenian refugees from the Ottoman Empire which numbered in the 400 to 500 thousands are also included in this final sum. The fact that the population of the region remained the same in spite of the influx of the refugees in Armenia points to an apparent loss of 400 to 500 thousand people in the region in question.

Boghos Nubar Pasha on the other hand, along side his conflicting comments, presents grossly rounded estimates in the millions and half millions concerning the losses incurred by a relatively small 4.5 million person Armenian population. While this reveals that he was in fact uninformed about the actual figures associ-

ated with the Armenian population it also points to the reason behind this move. Boghos Nubar Pasha aimed to gain as much territory as possible by stating these exaggerated numbers.

On another front, the Allies also invented unconventional formulas to further support their aim of granting the Armenians lands and thus diverged from the Wilsonian Principals. The concept of “counting the deceased along side the living” in relation to the Armenians is one of the extensions of these unconventional formulas. This concept is, in actuality, a British and not as it would seem an Armenian idea. In a report concerning the fate of the Ottoman Empire prepared by the English Foreign Ministry at the end of 1918, it was stipulated that when establishing the demands of the concerned parties vis-à-vis the pertinent territory, with respect to Armenia, the deceased alongside those relocated should be taken into consideration. Also the rights granted to Jewish emigrants to facilitate the formation of a nation in Palestine were to be extended to the Armenians in order to facilitate their emigration to the newly formed Armenia¹⁶. The reason for the existence of this arrangement is based on the fact that under the Wilsonian principle of self-determination the formation of an Armenian state on Ottoman soil (or a Jewish state in Palestine) is virtually impossible. As a matter of fact it states in the above mentioned British diplomatic note of 7 February 1919 that “to be able to achieve the historical claims of the Jews and Armenians the principal of self-determination should not be applied proportionately to their population figures”¹⁷. This statement indirectly states that the principal of self-determination would not be applied to these regions.

It is beyond doubt that this reasoning is not fair; while granting land to a certain nation, injustice is being inflicted upon the local population residing therein. In turn, this engenders reactions from these local inhabitants sparking (as in the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict) the onset of a bloody struggle with no end in sight.

In light of the foregoing, it can be surmised that the Allies chose to disregard the principal of self-determination due to the fact that if applied, the principal would allot governance over the region to the apparent majority presented by the Turks and other Muslims in the region. The underlying reason for this choice was the desire to punish the vanquished enemy. This was existent to such an extent that while a Turkish state was not even an option at the beginning of the Peace

¹⁶ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, p.267.

¹⁷ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, p.270.

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16 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, p.267.

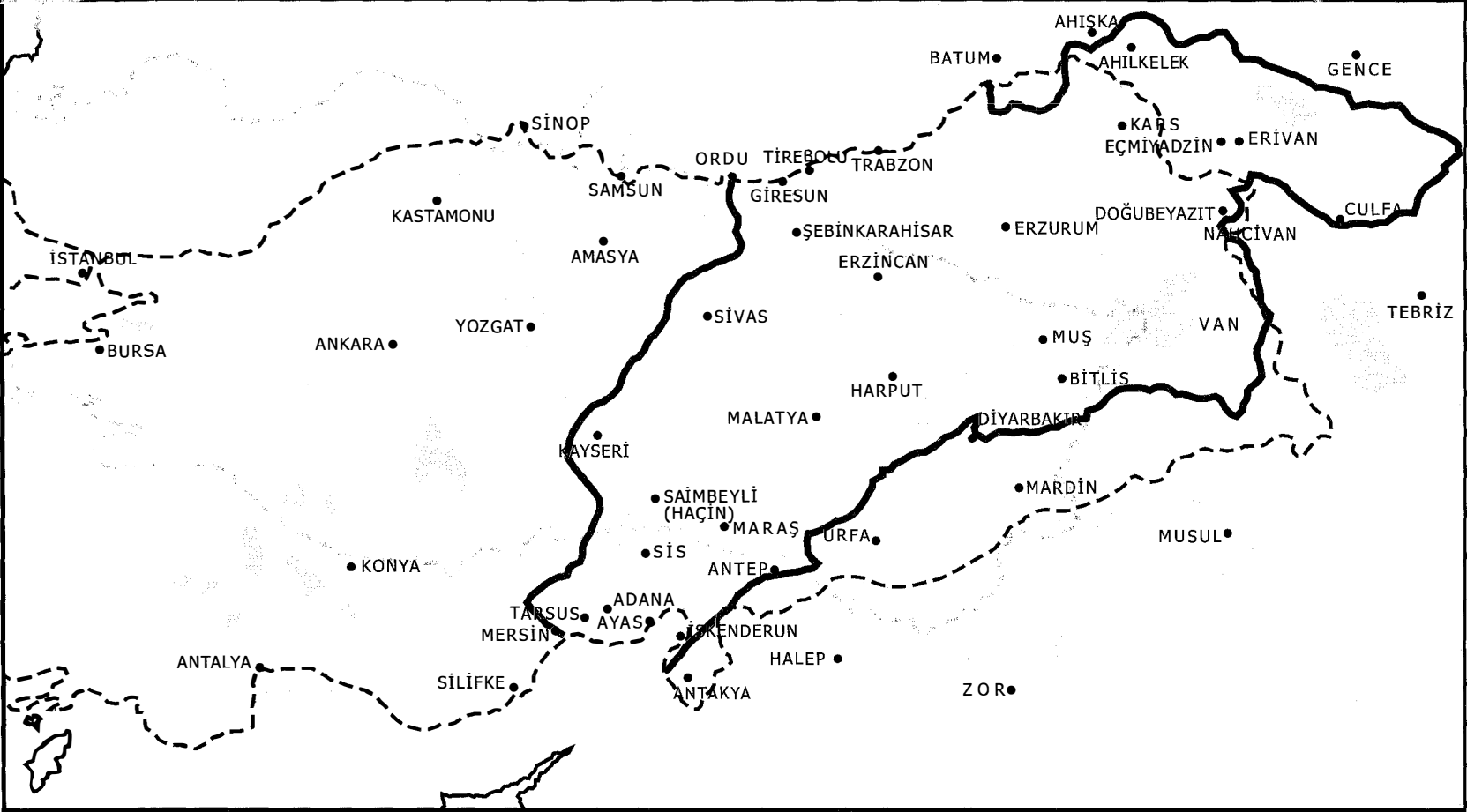
17 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic...*, p.270.

Conference, permission for such a state; be it a small one, was provided for only after it became apparent that especially India might react to the abolition of the Caliphate of the Muslims.

Also, it is the case that the Allies did not contemplate that the Turks would resist any effort to dismantle their nation. The basis for this gross miscalculation is that both France and Britain, due to their relatively unproblematic experiences with Muslim peoples in their colonies, expected the Turks to act the same way. Noninterference in religious beliefs and customs was of prime importance to the Muslim peoples mentioned above during this period. These peoples were untroubled by the governance of a foreign power as long as they maintained their tribal social structure. However, the enlightened Ottoman generations who had matured throughout the final years of the Empire identified with their proud and glorious past and thus could not see themselves subjugated by a foreign power. It was out of the question for them to accept subjugation to the great nations of Europe or the peoples (such as the Greeks and Armenians) they had governed previously. The fact that in a relatively short time an organized resistance was formed in Anatolia on a scale the Allies could not have imagined strengthens this argument. Consecutively a Parliament, a Government and a regular army were formed laying the foundation of the new Turkish state.

The Armenian state envisioned by the Allies could have only been formed in the absence of the Turkish resistance. In fact the Armenian State provisioned by the Treaty of Sevres- which was one third the size of the claims made by Boghos Nubar Pasha and the Armenian lands approved by Britain and the United States- was not created due to Turkish opposition. Consequently the small Armenian Republic of the Caucuses disappeared from the international scene only four months after Sevres.

We will continue exploring the subject of the Armenian claims made at the Paris Peace Conference in future articles.

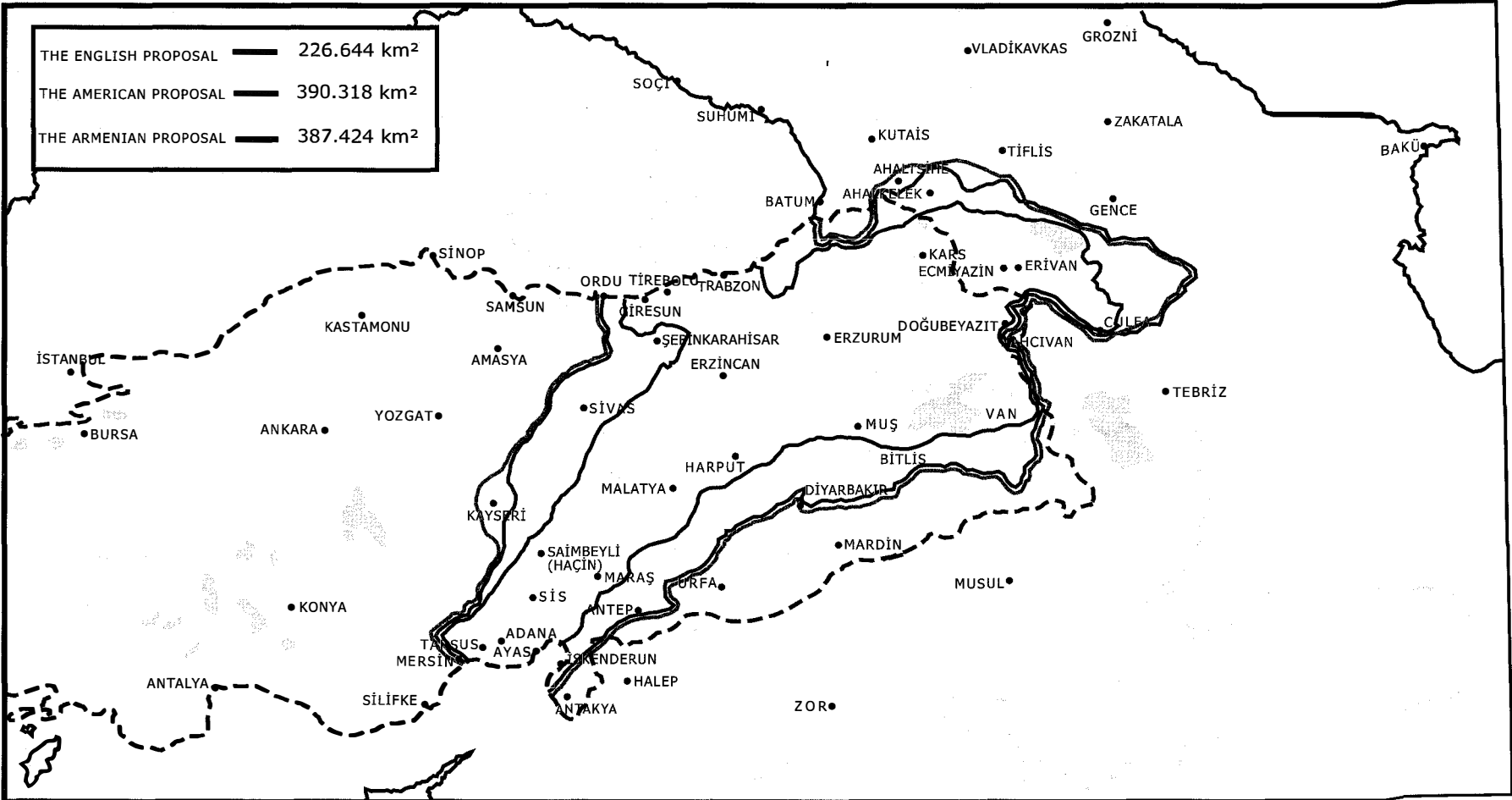


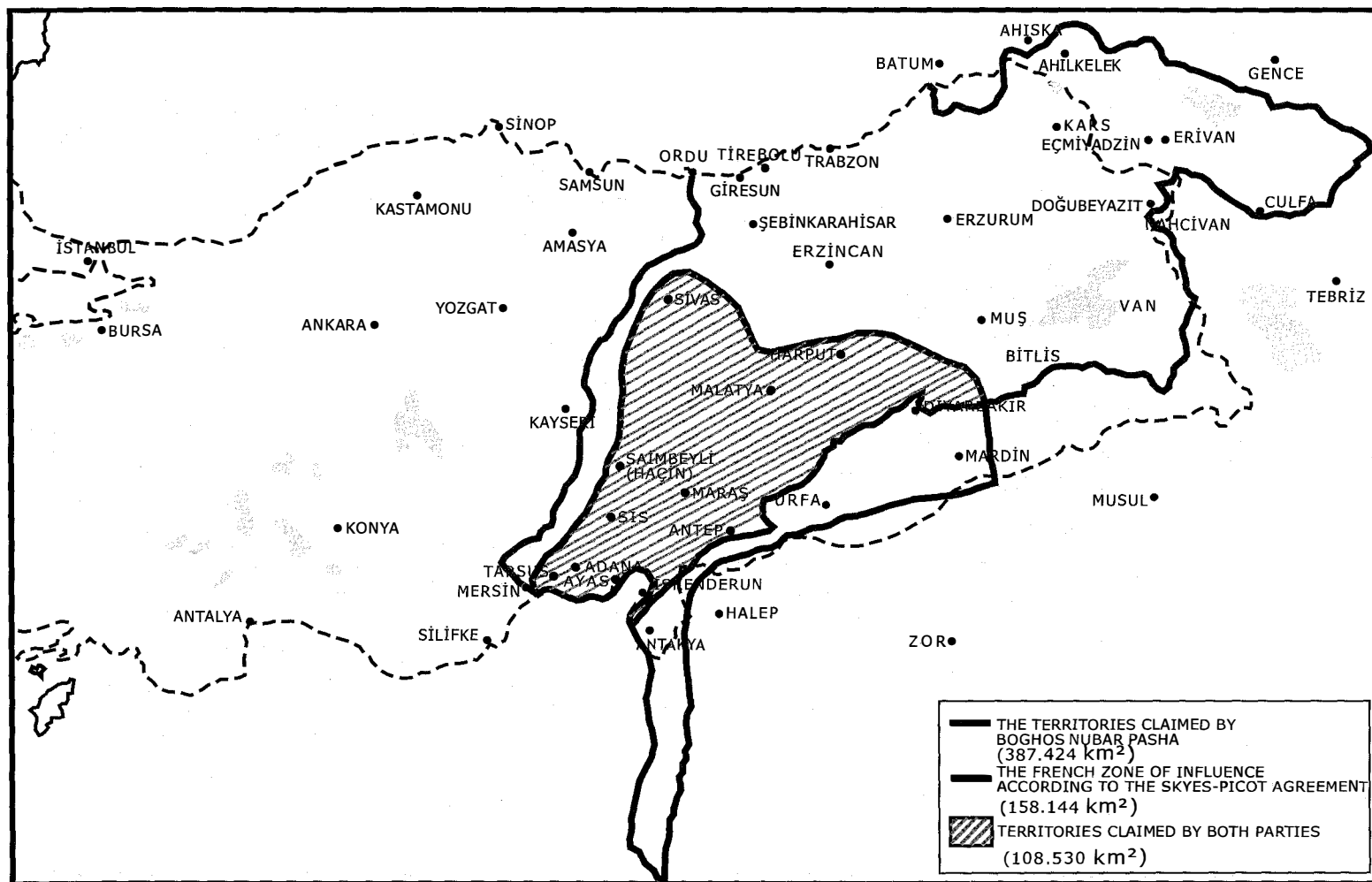
TERRITORIES CLAIMED BY BOGHOS NUBAR PASHA

MAP I

TERRITORIES CLAIMED BY BOGHOS NUBAR PASHA AND THE TERRITORIES THE UK AND THE US PLANNED ON GRANTING TO ARMENIA

MAP II





TERRITORIES CLAIMED BY BOGHOS NUBAR PASHA AND THE FRENCH ZONE OF INFLUENCE ACCORDING TO THE SYKES PICOT AGREEMENT

THE POPULATION OF ARMENIANS IN ADANA, TRABZON, AND THE SIX PROVINCES IN PROPORTION TO THE TOTAL POPULATION

M — AP IV

