



BOUNDARIES V. WITH TURKEY

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Following the signature of the Mudros Armistice on 30 October 1918, Turkey ceased to have any responsibility for Mesopotamia, which held the status of occupied enemy territory until the establishment of the Hashemite kingdom of Iraq after the Cairo Conference of March 1921. After this territorial change was embodied and defined in the Anglo-Turco-Iraqi boundary treaty of 5 June 1926 (Hurewitz, pp. 372-74), Persia's frontier with Turkey was considerably shortened. International opinion now generally recognized a delimitation running north from a point forty miles north-east of Rowanduz (Ravāndūz) along the line demarcated by the 1914 Turco-Persian Frontier Commission to the source of the river Aras (Araxes) below Mount Ararat. The Mixed Commission of 1914, on which Britain and Russia were vested with powers to arbitrate, had settled the line of the Perso-Ottoman frontier in detail for almost its whole length from the Persian Gulf to Mount Ararat (see Schofield, ed., VI, pp. 1-281). However, no decision had been taken on the course of the boundary through the northern province of Kotur (Qoṭūr), the territorial status of which had long been an open sore in Perso-Ottoman relations (see original 19th-century British Government documents in Schofield, ed., III, pp. 271-88, 393-450). The delimitation inherited from Persia and modern Turkey was principally the result of the Russo-Ottoman negotiations which preceded and resulted in the 17 November 1913 Constantinople Protocol. In so far as the delimitation reflected the territorial status quo prevailing in 1905 immediately



before the Ottoman empire launched upon its series of encroachments eastwards across the northern border zone deep into Persian territory, it was deemed generally beneficial to Persia.

During the international conferences convened in Europe following World War I to decide, among other things, the fate of many of the former Ottoman provinces, Persia forwarded territorial claims which would have considerably extended its western frontier. At the Paris peace conferences of 1919 the claims of Persian Foreign Minister Prince Fīrūz (Noṣrat-al-Dawla Fīrūz Mīrṣā) to Turkish Kurdistan, Mosul, and even Diyarbakır (Dīārbakr) were quickly rejected (Foreign Office Confidential Print, p. 4).

By the late 1920s, with Kurdish dreams of national independence in ruins, the basic problems observable in the 19th century of extending central authority to an insecure border zone returned to aggravate authorities in Tehran and Ankara. Any efforts made to stabilize conditions in the area by demarcating a boundary line or establishing a physical presence there would impinge upon the seasonal migrations of nomadic Kurdish groups straddled across the border zone. Furthermore, there was certainly no love lost between these populations and central authority in Tehran and Ankara.

Border incidents began to recur with disarming frequency in the late 1920s. In 1927 Persian troops penetrated as far west as Bayazit (Bāyazīd) in Turkey (see “Troubles on Turco-Persian Frontier,” *The Times*, 4 October 1927), while by 1929 Turkey occupied large areas east of the 1914 line, whose possession was deemed vital for national security (Foreign Office . . . , p. 4). In March 1929 Persia threatened to withhold ratification of the 1926 Perso-Turkish Treaty until such time as Turkish forces had withdrawn to the 1914 line (Clive). Importantly, though, Turkey was disinclined to recognize obligations of the Ottoman empire, and in particular she contended that the 1913 Constantinople Protocol had been forced upon Turkey at a time when she was too weak to resist (Edmonds). It should be noted that Persia, too, disputed the validity of the Protocol and the territorial limits it prescribed for the Transferred Territories (Zohāb) and the Şaṭṭ-al-‘Arab sectors of the boundary further south with Iraq.

After negotiating intermittently for the previous year and a half, the Turkish under-secretary for foreign affairs and the Persian ambassador in Ankara signed two frontier agreements on 9 April 1929. The first confirmed the alignment of the 1914 line (though no mention of this agreement was specified



in the text) but stipulated that a mixed boundary commission should further survey the areas of Bulak Bashi (Bulakbaşı), Kotur (Qoṭūr) and two small villages in the southern border zone named as Siro (Şiro) and Sartex (Sartaq) before coming to any decisions regarding the precise delimitation of the boundary in these regions. The second agreement was entitled the “Turco-Persian Convention for the establishment of Order and Security in the Frontier regions” (Marquess of Reading).

The signature in Tehran of the 23 January 1932 “Accord relatif à la Fixation de la Ligne Frontière entre Perse et la Turquie” by the foreign ministers of Persia and Turkey embodied limited but significant changes to the 1914 line, generally in Turkey’s favor. The line was pushed eastwards in the north to give Turkey complete control over Lesser Ararat and the Agri (Āgrī) Mountains and also in the middle stretch between the Armenian village Guirberan and Kuch Dagħ (Küçük Dağ) so as to leave Turkey an additional ninety square miles in the neighborhood of Kotur. By way of compensation Persia was awarded a small strip of land in the northern extreme of the frontier zone near Lake Borolan (as named in the agreement), and the 1914 line was projected westwards in the south to give Persia control over an additional eighty square miles between Bajirga (Bajirge) and Kuner Kota Dagħ (Kötü Dağ; Hoare, 1 July 1932). Though Article Two of the Agreement specified that a commission for the final demarcation of the frontier would begin work in June 1932 this did not actually happen until the summer of 1934 (Hoare, 26 June 1934).

By an agreement of 26 May 1937 a small rectification of the 1932 line was made in Persia’s favor in the neighborhood of Marbishu (referred to as Maz Bicho in text of 1932 agreement) in the southern section of the frontier between Bajirga and the Kuner Kota Dagħ. This was occasioned when it was realized that the maps used in the 1932 delimitation (ironically those produced to accompany the Procès-Verbaux of the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission in 1914) had incorrectly marked the position of the monastery of Deir Marbishu (see “The Turkish-Persian Boundary,” *Geographical Journal* (London) 92/2, August 1938). On 14 March 1937 a new “Convention relative à la sécurité de la zone frontalière et au règlement des incidents et conflits surgissant dans la dite zone” was signed between Persia and Turkey, though the subsequent instruments of ratification were not exchanged until 11 July 1939 (Bullard). The Second Article of the Saadabad (Sa’dābād) Pact, signed in Tehran between Persia, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan on 17 Tir 1316 Š./8 July



1937, stipulated that the inviolability of Persian frontiers must be respected (Hurewitz, pp. 509-10).

Though minor border incidents have occurred with some regularity since World War II, neither Persia nor Turkey has seriously disputed the legality of the 1932 line with its small modification of 1937, and on the whole the relations between Tehran and Ankara since World War II have been good. Certainly, no developments have occurred affecting the juridical basis of the frontier since 1937. In so far as the Perso-Turkish frontier zone has occupied authorities in Tehran and Ankara this has been in their respective dealings with their Kurdish minority populations, who inhabit the zone. Various frontier security arrangements were signed between 1955, when both states signed as members of the [Baghdad Pact](#) (later to be succeeded by [CENTO](#)), and Bahman 1357 Š./February 1979 when the shah was overthrown by the Revolution. During the Gulf war the revolutionary regime in Tehran and the Turkish government continued to cooperate on the issue of cross-border security. In December 1984 an agreement was reached to suppress the irredentist activities of Kurdish groups stationed on either side of the frontier while some progress was made in the joint policing of the boundary the following year (Chubin, p. 24).

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