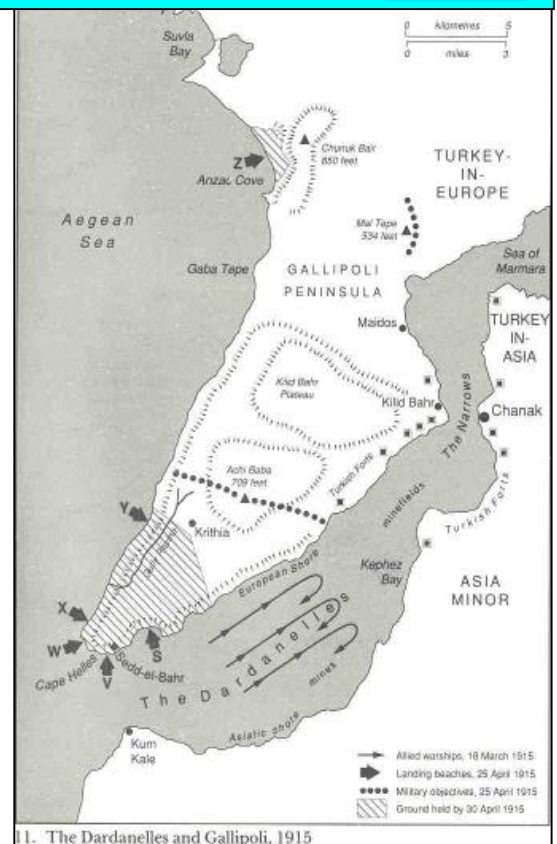


The Chanak Crisis

In 1922 the basic issues of Canada's ill-defined autonomy were brought sharply into focus when Turkish troops invaded a neutral zone created along the Straits of the Dardanelles. This zone had been created out of Turkish territory under the terms of the Allied peace treaty of 1920 with Turkey, and a force of British troops centred at the town of Chanak was all that remained of an international force that had garrisoned the zone. Amidst rumors of war, Britain asked the Canadian government if it would pledge troops to help reinforce the British garrison if war broke out. In Quebec, Bourassa reflected French-Canadian opinion when he asked, "Who in Canada has ever heard of Chanak until this moment?" Even in English Canada, where there was considerable vocal support for the request, public opinion was by no means unanimous. Moreover, while Bourassa's question might reflect Quebec's traditional antipathy to Canadian participation in imperial affairs, it also pointed to the failure of the oft-extolled theory of a common imperial foreign policy. The fact was that Canada (albeit for quite justifiable reasons) had not been consulted on the policy that had led to the so-called "Chanak crisis," but now was being asked to accept that policy without question. Once again Britain appeared to be taking Canada's support for granted, and though many Canadians were inclined to offer help, they were also angry that Britain should automatically assume that there would be help from Canada. Admittedly in a world of fast moving events, consultation between Britain and the Dominions might often be impossible. On the other hand, Canadians were beginning to object to being taken for granted and were starting to realize that their own interests, both domestic and external, could best be served by an independent foreign policy. King sensed this national feeling and, while not closing the door, insisted that the whole matter of Chanak would have to be discussed by the Canadian Parliament. Since Canada at this time was legally still a British colony, she was probably committed to granting the British request for troops, but fortunately the issue never became a serious one because Britain and Turkey resolved their differences by discussion and treaty. The crisis, however, had highlighted the problems of Canadian foreign policy more strongly than ever before.



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