

Conclusion

Ozan Örmeci 

Turkish-French relations have always been important, but also fragile and problematic at the same time. Starting in 1536 with Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent's letter to French King François I (Francis I), Turkish-French relations have since been characterized not only by both positive feelings like admiration, friendliness, and cooperation but also negative feelings, such as jealousy, hostility, and competition. So, while the Ottoman State established important diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural ties with France, in many periods, the two empires engaged in harsh competition and even military campaigns against each other. Starting in the 19th century, the decaying Ottoman State looked for French and British support against the growing Russian power and influence in its geography. The Crimean War of 1853–1856 was a solid achievement of that era. During this time, the two sides built extensive relations in terms of both military technology and trade. As the Ottoman State modernized, it gradually transformed itself into a constitutional monarchy in the early 20th century. In the meantime, the status and rights of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects became important determinants in bilateral relations, and France sometimes acted as the guardian of Christian communities. However, France and Britain later decided to accelerate the fall of the Ottoman State, which had been described as the “sickman of Europe” in the early 20th century in order to share its lands. So, as the First World War (1914–1918) ended, the Ottoman State began to collapse, and its territories were invaded by occupying British, Greek, French, and Italian forces starting in 1919. So, this long-time friendship ended with open hostility and France's invasion of southern Anatolia (cities such as Adana, Mersin, Osmaniye, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, and Şanlıurfa).

In many ways, after the Turkish Independence War (1919–1922) and the establishment of a new republican regime in Anatolia under Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in 1923, France was a model country for Turkey. France was the

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first Western country to recognize the government with the Ankara Treaty in 1921 and chose to retreat from Turkish lands without a war. Thanks to this wise decision, which erased bad memories of the recent past, Turkey and France engaged in cooperation in many areas following this treaty. France also highly praised Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's positive image as a great Muslim modernizer during these decades. In fact, France created the image of a modernizing Muslim leader due to Atatürk's high prestige, as well as the success of his reforms.

The two countries were successful in maintaining their alliance during the Cold War (1945–1991), as a result of their membership in NATO, as well as their alliance with the United States (U.S.) against Soviet (communist) expansionism. Since France is a founding member of NATO (1949) and Turkey is one of the earlier members (1952), both countries were classified as “Western/Occidental states” and “U.S. allies” throughout the Cold War. However, France withdrew from the integrated military command of the Alliance for long years between 1966 and 2009 and did not act as an ideal NATO partner. At the same time, Turkey also acted on its own when Turkish national interests did not match American national interests in the 1970s and organized the Cyprus Peace Operation of 1974 against American warnings (e.g. Johnson Letter). This was related to the two countries' strong imperial legacies, as well as Gaullist and Kemalist traditions of foreign policy, which prioritize national independence and national interests above bloc politics. In addition to NATO membership, the two countries were two of the earliest members of the Council of Europe in 1949 and established high-level friendly political relations following the Second World War. Moreover, both Turkey and France were founding members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1961 and made commitments to the liberal international world order against Soviet expansionism and a communist developmental model.

There were other important factors in Ankara's and Paris's relationship throughout the Cold War as well. These involved¹:

1. Turkey's indifference towards the Algerian independence in the late 1950s, which eventually led to France supporting the addition of Turkey to the European Economic Community (EEC) and the signing of the Ankara Agreement in 1963.
2. The workforce agreement signed between the two countries in 1965 that led to the emergence of a Turkish diaspora in France due to Turkish immigrants that went to France between 1965 and 1974.²
3. General agreement between the two countries in terms of their Middle East projections and policies (especially regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict).
4. The signing of the ELCO (*Enseignement de la langue et culture d'origine*) agreement in 1975 made Turkish education for Turkish immigrants possible in France.

¹ Erjada Progonati (2017), “1946–1989 Soğuk Savaş Dönemi Türk-Fransız İlişkileri”, in Haydar Çakmak (ed.) *Geçmişten Günümüze Türk-Fransız İlişkileri*, Ankara: Efil Yayınevi, pp. 118–127.

² Since 1973–1974, Turkey is not sending massive work force to France in terms of this agreement.

5. France's political support to Greece was perceived as "*prohellenic*" by Ankara during the Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1974–1981) and François Mitterrand (1981–1995) presidencies.
6. French opposition to Turkey's military involvement in Cyprus in 1974 (especially after the second intervention).
7. Increasing French awareness and involvement in the Kurdish Question in Turkey and the Middle East.
8. Turkish anger towards France's support of Armenians and the Armenian Genocide claims, especially after ASALA's terrorist activities in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

However, with the end of the Cold War, Turkish-French relations also began to change like other diplomatic relations and the world in general. During the ongoing post-Cold War period, the two countries have kept their alliance, even if engaging in competitive relations as well. That is why, I see the general characteristic of Turkish-French relations in the post-Cold War era as a "double-edged sword" or a "pendulum" that sometimes progresses, while other times it stagnates and is conflictual.

With the fall of the USSR and the end of the Cold War (1945–1991), Turkish-French relations entered a new period in the early 1990s. Turkey's growing ambitions and economic activities alerted France and led them to many times choose to counterbalance Turkey. Turkey, in this new period, rediscovered its Turkic and Muslim identity in order to reach countries beyond its typical foreign and economic boundaries. Accordingly, especially during the ongoing Justice and Development Party (JDP/AK Parti) era, Turkey is often seen as ambitious for increasing both its soft and hard power in different regions. France, on the other hand, continued to be one of the five most important countries in the world with its United Nations (UN) Security Council seat, but its capacities were not considered sufficient anymore; so, it was no longer treated as a superpower that could lead and direct global political developments. Thus, France's "search of rank" was another key issue in its efforts to counterbalance Turkey. That is why, post-Cold War Turkish-French relations have often developed as a "double-edged sword"; while positive political, diplomatic, economic, cultural, and social relations determined the general mood of their relations by encouraging further integration between the two countries (e.g. Chirac period), in many other times (e.g. Sarkozy presidency), conflicting interests, political problems (Kurdish and Armenian Question), different civilizational backgrounds, and cultural differences between the two sides, as well as France's aspiration to counterbalance Turkey's influence in some areas, outweighed and created a conflictual mood. To explain it more literally, Turkish-French relations in the post-Cold War era can be described as a rotating pendulum that sometimes makes progress, while other times goes the other direction. Thus, Turkish-French relations in the post-Cold War can be defined simply as "volatile", although there is great potential for establishing a harmonious alliance due to decades—if not centuries—of old diplomatic, political, economic, cultural, and social relations between Turkey and France.

In order to cover all these issues, together with Dr. Aurélien Denizeau, we have edited this volume on Turkish-French relations. This is one of the rare English books

on Turkish-French relations, as well as the most comprehensive one. That is why I can proudly claim that this is the best academic book for this topic.

The book contains important parts and chapters. Following the “Introduction” by Aurélien Denizeau, the first part of the book is about the “Historical Background of Turkish-French Relations”, which is devoted to the chronological and historical study of Turkish-French relations. There are four original chapters within this part of the book. Zeynep Arıkanlı, in her chapter entitled “Ottoman-French Relations”, brings historical information and notes on Ottoman-French relations to light. Fabrice Monnier, in his chapter entitled “France and Turkey (1918–1939): Disillusion and Disappointment”, analyzes Franco-Turkish relations during the first half of the twentieth century by focusing on the First and Second World Wars. Aurélien Denizeau, in his chapter entitled “Turkish-French Relations during the Second World War and the Cold War”, examines bilateral relations between France and Turkey during the Cold War. The last chapter of the first part is written by myself and Eren Alper Yılmaz and is entitled “Turkish-French Relations in the Post-Cold War Era”. This chapter focuses on the complicated nature of Franco-Turkish relations through the perspective of changing Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

The second part of the book is called “Anatomy of Turkish-French Relations” and contains four original chapters. This part is designed specifically to analyze French-Turkish relations through different points of focus, such as diplomatic relations, strategic relations, economic relations, and social and cultural relations. Jana Jabbour, in her chapter entitled “Turkey-France Political and Diplomatic Relations: Contemporary Issues and Future Perspectives”, analyzes Franco-Turkish relations on the basis of diplomacy by focusing on important issues such as Turkey’s diaspora politics towards France and the two countries, which sometimes contradicted and competed against Middle Eastern policies. Armağan Gözkaman, in his chapter entitled “‘A Constant Duel between Paris and Ankara’ or the ‘Impossible Strategic Partnership’”, discusses Franco-Turkish relations from a strategic perspective. The third chapter within this part has an economic focus and is written by young economy expert Temmuz Yiğit Bezmez. Bezmez, in his chapter called “Secure Cement of the Historical Amity under the Shadow of Diplomatic Tensions: Economic Relations between Turkey and France”, analyzes bilateral economic relations between Turkey and France, often referred to as one of the strongest aspects of relations. Şebnem Udum and Merve Gezen, in their chapter called “Social and Cultural Relations between Turkey and France”, examine Franco-Turkish ties in terms of culture and social relations.

The third and last part of the book is entitled “Key Issues in Turkish-French Relations” and contains six original chapters. The first chapter within this part is written by French researcher Tancrède Jossier and is entitled “France Facing Turkey in Eastern Mediterranean, Middle-East, and North Africa: Hold Your Rank?”. In this chapter, Jossier focuses on policies enacted by the two countries, the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Mediterranean and tries to show conflictual elements within these policies. Sina Kısacık and Gamze Helvacıköylü, in their chapter “A Comparison of Turkish and French Approaches on Energy related Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean: Reconciliation of Interests or Continuation of Clash of Interests?”,

examines bilateral relations by focusing on Eastern Mediterranean and energy politics. Beata Piskorska, in her chapter “Turkey’s EU Membership Process and Its Effects on Franco-Turkish Relations” makes a valuable contribution by discussing bilateral relations through the perspective of Turkey’s European Union membership process. On the other hand, Gözde Kurt and Ahmet İlkey Ceyhan use their expertise in the fourth chapter, entitled “A Brief Analysis of Turkey-France Relations in terms of Media Diplomacy: Example of *Aujourd’hui La Turquie*”, to analyze both France and Turkey’s bilateral relations and public diplomacy efforts in recent years by analyzing *Aujourd’hui La Turquie*, the sole newspaper published in French in Turkey. The fifth chapter within this part is written by young historian Maxime Gauin and is entitled “The Impact of the Armenian Question on the French-Turkish Relations”. His research in this chapter discusses the effects of the 1915 Events and related discussions on Franco-Turkish relations. The last chapter of this part, and the book, is written by American scholar Matthew Weiss. In his chapter, entitled “Turkish-French Tensions over the Kurdish Question and the Ambitions and Status of the Kurdish Actors in Northern Syria: Stuck in a Stalemate or Destined for a *Détente*?”, Weiss discusses the effects that the Kurdish Question and the Syrian civil war had on these countries’ relations.

Finally, I am very confident that this book will be the most comprehensive and best quality research written on Franco-Turkish relations thus far. Of course, our aim is to encourage other professors and researchers to improve our studies and publish better pieces in the future. As the French say, “*C’est toujours le bon moment*”: It is always a good time to create a sublime work.