

French-Turkish Relations 1981-2017

Mohammed Hamzah Hussein

Asst. Prof. Dr., College of Education for Humanities, University of Al-Hamdaniya, Iraq
dr.mohammed.hamza@uohamdaniya.edu.iq

Abstract

During the period 1981-2017, Turkish-French relations witnessed important developments, specifically during the rule of the two French presidents (François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac), especially in the economic aspect.

However, the most lukewarm years of political relations were during the era of French President (Nicolas Sarkozy) due to his repeated French statements on the issue of the reality of nationalities within Turkish society, in addition to France's position rejecting Turkey's accession to the European Union.

It is noticed by tracing the Turkish-French diplomatic relations during the study years to the extent of the continuity of official relations between the two countries even in the presence of differences, which reflected positively on the continuation of economic and cultural relations.

Keywords: French-Turkish Relations, Nicolas Sarkozy, François Hollande, Political Relations, Economic Relations.

Introduction

Contemporary Turkish-French relations are one of the important issues, as the two sides are political partners in many international organizations, most notably the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Although Turkey did not obtain full membership in the European Union, it is considered an effective economic partner within the European system, as the Europeans have tried for several decades to maintain this partnership.

The research aims to trace the course of Turkish-French relations during the years 1981-2017, which witnessed the rule of four French presidents. The study also attempts

to examine the factors of convergence and divergence in the relations of the two countries at all levels (political, economic).

The research was divided into Three sections. The first topic was studied (French-Turkish relations during the era of the four presidents 1981-2017). As for the second topic, it discussed the topic (Tension factors in French-Turkish relations 1981-2017). The third topic was under the title (Turkish-French Economic Relations).

The First Topic: French-Turkish Relations During the Era of the Four Presidents 1981-2017

First: The reign of French Presidents François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac 1981-2007:

During the eighties, the relations between Paris and Ankara were seriously strained due to the activities of the Armenian terrorist organization ASALA. Since the French state did not engage in an active struggle with ASALA, who assassinated Turkish diplomats, Turkey's view of France was seriously deteriorated. France is a state that recognizes the Armenian Genocide and sees Turkey as a criminal in this regard. A similar approach exists in France on the Kurdish Question. As a matter of fact, Paris sees Armenians and Kurds as “nations oppressed by the Turks” (Açık, 2017, S.13).

The opening of the Paris Kurdish Institute in the 1980s and the award of the Palme d'Or to the Kurdish director Yılmaz Güney at the Cannes Film Festival for his movie "Yol" showed France's sensitivity to the Kurdish Question and even increased this sensitivity. the Armenian and Kurdish issues prevent the two countries from becoming allies. In France's attitude on this issue, not only human rights awareness and emotional reasons, but also the interest-oriented approach that has always existed in great states are also effective. However, the fact that this situation started to harm the trade with France and negatively affect the French companies enabled Turkey to recover the situation at some point in every period (Firat, 2009, S.2). As a matter of fact, when relations started to develop badly in the 1980s, President François Mitterrand sent his special

representative Étienne Manac'h to Turkey and asked him to negotiate the Armenian issue with Ankara. Manac'h, who was a member of the French Communist Party in his youth, is a name that attracts attention and sometimes even reaction in his own country due to his closeness to the Soviets. On the other hand, Manac'h, who is an experienced and successful diplomat, solved the bottlenecks in a short time and Turkish-French relations started to rise again since 1984. For this reason, 1984 is an important turning point in terms of bilateral relations. However, the Franco-Greek alliance, symbolized by Andreas Papandreou and François Mitterrand in this period, negatively affected Turkish-French relations (Manco, 2005, P.16).

After 1986 when Jacques Chirac became Prime Minister, relations have been on the road to a rapid recovery. Chirac has already stated that he intends to improve relations before he was elected. In 1986, the French Minister of Defense and a group of businessmen visited Turkey and the Joint Business Council Cultural Commission and Scientific and Technical Cooperation Commissions were convened between the two countries. On 17-18 February, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs visited France and the softening in relations became even more evident. In 1987, French Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade Michel Noir and Industry PTT and Trade Minister Alain Madelin came to Turkey. In 1988, French Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond visited Turkey. Thanks to these frequent visits, relations were improved and the anger between the peoples was calmed (Embel, 2005, S.279).

After 1990, the European Union began to become a more decisive actor in bilateral relations. Although France's Armenian and Kurdish policy continues to create problems, bilateral relations have not turned into the open line of opposition of the early 1980s (Soysal, 2003, S.1024).

Although there were fluctuations from time to time, relations were still maintained at a certain level and even some developments were recorded. However, the 2007-2012 period, when Nicolas Sarkozy was President, was an exceptionally negative period. However, even in this period, we cannot talk about a major change in the official

Turkish policy of the French state. Therefore, the style adopted, rather than the actions carried out during Sarkozy's period, distorted the relations between Ankara and Paris. As a matter of fact, according to many Turkish academics, Turkey-France relations follow a stable diplomatic course in the long term. This stability is constant even in the context of the continuation of the issues of dispute (ÇaPanoğlu and Servantle, 2015, S.16). Economic and cultural relations have not fallen below a certain level since the first years of the Republic, in fact, they have generally progressed. In the political arena, issues such as Turkey's EU membership process and the 1915 Armenian Incidents (So-called Armenian Genocide) have been the subjects of constant crisis in recent years. While some French Presidents such as Jacques Chirac and François Hollande approached Turkey's EU membership warmly, some other French Presidents such as Valery Giscard d'Estaing and Nicolas Sarkozy strongly opposed it (Açık, 2017, S.14).

Looking at the period before Sarkozy; The eras of François Mitterrand (1981-1995) and Jacques Chirac (1995-2007) appear. The most important factor that distinguishes these two leaders in terms of Turkish-French relations is their view of the Kurdish Question. While Mitterrand was a very sensitive President with the influence of his wife Danielle Mitterrand, Chirac became a pragmatic person as well. Moreover, according to Kürşad Turan, the relations of the two countries with the USA before Sarkozy showed surprisingly similar tendencies. For example, the tense period before the 1991 Gulf War in Turkey resulted in the resignation of Chief of General Staff Necip Torumtay, Foreign Minister Ali Bozer and Minister of National Defense Safa Giray, while in France this process resulted in the resignation of Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement (Billion, 2012, P. 18) . Apart from these, during the Chirac period, France's opening to the Arab-Islamic world became concrete and Paris's critical style towards Israel increased. Olivier Guitta wrote that in this way, Paris both managed to keep its relations with its Muslims at a good level and became an active country in Middle East politics. In addition, the fact that the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus became a member of the EU under the name of the Republic of Cyprus and representing the whole divided island has made the Cyprus Problem a more

important issue in bilateral relations since the Chirac period. However, during the Chirac period, bilateral economic relations showed a stable development and the trade volume increased 5 times and reached 10 billion Euros (Euro) (penez, 2006, S.94). Turkish-Greek rivalry has also been a problematic factor in Turkish-French relations until Turkey's relations improved in 1999, thanks to the then Foreign Ministers İsmail Cem-Yorgo Papandreou duo. However, since this date when Turkish-Greek relations improved, anti-Turkey attitudes continued, especially on the French right, for fear that Turkey would become a rival to France by becoming a member of the European Union. Although the view towards Ankara is more positive in left and center politics, Turkey's practices that attract reactions on issues such as the democratic regime, human rights and freedom of the press continue to be the subject of criticism in France. As a result, although Turkish-French relations have always been preserved at a certain level, the problematic factors have never been completely eliminated (Fabius, 2019, S.26).

Second: The era of Nicolas Sarkozy 2007-2012:

France-Turkey relations have become more tense than ever before during Nicolas Sarkozy's Presidency (2007-2012). Sarkozy's opposition to Turkey's membership to the EU without resorting to diplomatic courtesy has caused the Turkish public to talk about the opposition to Turkey that has emerged in Paris in recent years. Sarkozy opposed Turkey's EU membership in principle and drew attention to the fact that these two countries belong to different civilization families as well as geographically on different continents and opened the borders of the EU to discussion (Açık, 2017, S.15).

As a matter of fact, during the Sarkozy period, with the great efforts of France, Turkey was prevented from opening 5 chapters in the ongoing membership negotiations with the EU. According to Dorothee Schmid, she did not want to spoil relations with Turkey during the Sarkozy era, but only opposed this country's membership to the EU. According to Didier Billion, one of the factors affecting Sarkozy's behavior is that, as a centre-right politician, he does not want to lose votes to the far right (Le Pen line) (örmeçi, 2016, S.154).

Therefore, Sarkozy's opposition to Turkey is a tactical issue that was brought to the agenda before the elections. As a matter of fact, Sarkozy, who declared that he would end the negotiation process with Turkey during the election campaign, ensured that only 5 chapters were stopped after he was elected, but he did not end the negotiations. However, it should be noted that Sarkozy also made an important mistake here. Because, France's attitude towards Turkey's EU membership during Sarkozy's period was perceived as hostility to the Turkish people rather than a political preference. Even the fact that Sarkozy chewed gum during his visit to Turkey was criticized in the Turkish media at that time (Marcou, 2016, P.23).

In 2011, the passage of a law criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the French Parliament, combined with the already existing antipathy for Sarkozy, has strengthened the anti-Paris winds in Turkey. Later, although this law was annulled by the French Constitutional Council (Turan, 2017, S. 19), serious problems were experienced in economic and political relations. In addition, when the Turkish policy followed by France during Sarkozy's period was treated as Sarkozy's personal whim by the Turkish media (During this period), Sarkozy's antipathy in Turkey went so far that, in a news report of Vatan newspaper dated December 4, 2009, the French President attacked Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. There is a perception that if the "Sarkozy factor" is eliminated in Turkey, everything will be okay (Schmid, 2014, S. 31).

But it is wrong to consider even the Sarkozy era as a total failure. Because the "Mediterranean Union" or "Union for the Mediterranean" project, which was put forward in this period and in which Turkey could play a very important role if realized, has not been adequately examined and its importance has not been understood by the public and intellectuals in both countries for some reason (Açık, 2017, S.16).

The Arab Spring, which started at the end of the Sarkozy period, had a negative impact on Turkish-French relations at that time, as it was not used well enough in the context of bilateral relations. In this process, a perception of a struggle for influence in the Mediterranean was created between the two countries, which are NATO allies and

supported the revolutionary atmosphere created by the Arab Spring, and the emphasis was placed on "strategic competition" instead of "strategic cooperation" (<http://www.mfa.gov.tr>).

Third: Francois Hollande era 2012-2017:

The election of Socialist Party (PS) candidate François Hollande for the Presidency of France in 2012 was welcomed by Turkey due to the troubled relations in Sarkozy's period, and hopes were born for developments in bilateral relations. For this reason, there were those who claimed that Hollande's rule would be a period of "normalization". Hollande met with the 11th President Abdullah Gül for the first time in Chicago in May 2012 as part of the NATO meeting and signaled that a new page would be opened in bilateral relations. Following this meeting, then Foreign Ministers Laurent Fabius and Ahmet Davutoğlu held a positive meeting in July of the same year. After this meeting, Davutoğlu talked about the developing "visionary cooperation" between the two countries. François Hollande, who gave the message, "Turkey has no chance of EU membership in the next 5 years, because the criteria have not been fulfilled," in a Twitter message he sent just before he took office, also said that right after he was elected, he opened one of the 5 chapters in the Turkey-EU negotiations, which were blocked. He took a significant step forward in the symbolic sense (le Point, 23.10.2017).

Again, in December 2015, is a concrete proof of the softening of Turkey-EU relations during the Hollande period. As a matter of fact, as a result of the agreement reached in March 2016, the European Union promised to provide additional support to Turkey for Syrian refugees to continue to be hosted in Turkey (le Monde, 5.1.2018), and gave the green light for Turkish citizens to pass visa-free to EU countries if Turkey fulfills 72 criteria. In addition, some symbolic steps taken during the Hollande period were seen as promising in terms of normalization. For example, the intense participation of French and Turkish deputies in the night organized for the 5th time by the French-Turkish Business Federation (FEDIF) and the Paris Intercultural Dialogue Platform

(PDP), established by entrepreneurs of Turkish origin in December 2013, was perceived as a positive development (Haber Türk, 6.1.2018).

Again, during the Hollande period, the 4th Consulate of Turkey in France was opened in Bordeaux, and it was decided to open the 5th Consulate in Nantes. In addition to these, a new faculty on Islamic Theology was opened in Strasbourg, where the officials of the Turkish Religious Affairs Presidency teach. However, in the following days, President François Hollande's call on Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide due to the 1915 Events drew a reaction in the public opinion in Turkey and there were signs of a return to the line of confrontation in the Sarkozy era (<http://www.politikaakademisi.org.>).

The reaction of the two countries against the authoritarian regimes and dictatorships in the Middle East and North Africa in the first years of the Arab Spring actually brought these two countries closer in foreign policy after Sarkozy. However, with the exception of Tunisia, which was the only successful example of the Arab Spring, the collapse of the new regime in Egypt with the Sisi coup and the emergence of a civil war environment due to the failure of the transition in Libya and Syria prevented the development of comprehensive cooperation on this issue. In this process, these two countries (Açık, 2017, S.18), which opposed the authoritarian Bashar Assad regime in Syria, stepped on the brakes (especially France) after the emergence of the fundamentalist terrorist organization called the Islamic State of Iraq-Sham (ISIS) and placed ISIS at the top of their perception of threat rather than the Assad regime. Turkey, on the other hand, showed a more strict stance on this issue and maintained the priority of its opposition stance against the Bashar Assad regime (Marcon, 2016, P.25).

In addition, the President of France, François Hollande, paid a 2-day official visit to Turkey on 27-28 January 2014. This contact, which came 22 years after François Mitterrand's last official visit in 1992, is therefore very important. On the occasion of the visit, 13 agreements were signed in various fields such as energy, transportation, customs, agriculture and credit facility, and with the "Joint Political Declaration on

Establishing a Strategic Framework for Cooperation" signed by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, bilateral relations gained a new institutional framework. On October 10, 2014, the 2014-2016 Action Plan for the implementation of the aforementioned Joint Statement was signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two countries (le Monde, 27.10.2014).

Following this visit, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid a visit to Paris on 31 October 2014; The revival in bilateral relations was confirmed during the visit. During the meetings held during the visit, there was no difference of opinion between the parties in cooperation against terrorism and France showed a common approach with Turkey regarding the Syrian crisis. President Hollande, again during this visit, announced that the 23rd and 24th chapters could be opened unconditionally and stated that new investments could be made in many fields such as space and aviation, defense, agriculture and food, and nuclear energy. At the beginning of 2016, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visited Turkey (http://institut_bosphore.org).

The Second Topic: Tension Factors in French-Turkish Relations 1981-2017

First: The Armenian problem:

France first defined the 1915 Events as genocide in its National Assembly in 1998. In 2001, this definition gained a legal character with a law passed by the Parliament. Following this law, "Armenian Genocide" monuments were erected in many cities of France. In 2006, France, which was once shown as the homeland of freedom of thought, passed a very interesting new law that criminalizes the denial of this controversial issue, which has no equivalent in international law (Denial Law). This law, which tried to equate the controversial 1915 Events with the Holocaust, was stopped by the French Senate with the pressure of Turkey (Açık, 2017, S.19).

However, the law came to the agenda again in 2011 and this time it passed the French Senate as well as the National Assembly. However, the annulment of the law by the

French Constitutional Council in 2012 on the grounds that it contradicted Article 34 of the Constitution and Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, prevented a major disaster in bilateral relations(<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en.>)

A decision taken by the French Constitutional Council in early January 2016 can be read as an indication that France is trying to reach a more balanced position on this issue. As a matter of fact, as a result of this case, the French Constitutional Council, rejecting the views presented for the annulment of the law defining the 1915 Events as "genocide", however, for the first time, drew attention to the differences between the Armenian allegations and the Holocaust, and decided that the two historical events could not be evaluated in the same context. According to French expert Dorothee Schmid, the most important problem in bilateral relations is the Armenian issue (<http://www.iris-france.org>).

However, considering that the 100th anniversary of the 1915 Events has been overcome, it can be hoped that the weight of this issue in international politics and bilateral relations will decrease over time. At this point, the main reason for the reactions in the Turkish public; France's ignorance of other Anatolian peoples who were lost in the 1915 Events and its sensitivity towards the 1915 Events is that it does not show the Turkish ancestry to the peoples of Turkish descent, like the Azerbaijani people who were subjected to the Armenian genocide in 1992 in Khojaly (Manco, 2005, p.29).

Therefore, France is perceived as "pro-Armenian" in Turkey. All efforts of Turkey to improve relations with Armenia are almost ignored by France. Moreover, the fact that some French and European politicians and academics comment on this controversial political event with ideological motives without relying on historical evidence also disturbs serious French historians such as Maxime Gauin (Embel, 2005, S.280).

Second: Turkey's membership in the European Union:

In the EU marathon, which started with the Helsinki Summit, in which Turkey was accepted as a candidate country for full membership in 1999, 15 chapters have been

opened so far, and only one of them has been closed in the process of full membership negotiations to the EU started in 2005 (le Point, 25.10.2017). The Cyprus (Additional Protocol) Problem is the opening criterion for 8 chapters and the closing criterion for all other chapters, in line with the decision taken at the EU General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council on 11 December 2006. When the results of a survey conducted by IFOP in 2014 are analyzed, it is seen that 83% of the French are against Turkey's EU membership. This is a very high rate and it shows that in order for the French to support Turkey's membership, there must be major changes in this country. As a matter of fact, even if Turkey fulfills all the criteria for full membership, it is almost impossible for the French people to obtain a visa for membership in a referendum. Those who defend Turkey in the EU draw attention to the fact that Turkey, which is the 18th largest economy in the world with a population of more than 80 million and is currently a member of the Customs Union, is a very important market and ally (le Mond, 5.1.2018).

The fact that Turkey's foreign trade is European-centered and Turkish military forces' participation in EU (Bosnia and Kosovo) peace operations are cited as the basis for this. In addition, there are those who argue that Turkey should join the union in order for the EU to pursue a stronger foreign policy in regions such as the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa, where Turkey has been very influential in recent years. Another point that socialist Michel Rocard, one of the former Prime Ministers, draws attention is the necessity of keeping Turkey on the west side so that it does not move further to the East. Those who oppose Turkey's membership in the EU mostly emphasize that Turkey cannot make the necessary political and economic reforms for membership. A fact that those who oppose membership hesitate to say openly is that if Turkey becomes a member of the EU due to its rapidly increasing population, it will become one of the strongest countries in the union, and moreover, its population is almost entirely composed of Muslims. As a matter of fact, for the right-wing nationalist and far-right nationalists in France, Turkey's membership is seen as a major threat to the French national and European identity (Penez, 2006, S.96). The

concern that a large Turkish population will migrate to Europe in case of Turkey's membership to the EU also plays an important role in this fear. In France, while the far-right and recently centre-right politics are very clearly against Turkey's EU membership, left-wing politics are more constructive and in principle not against it (Haber Türk, 6.1.2018).

Third: the issue of democracy:

One of the factors that creates problems in Turkey-France and Turkey-EU relations in general is the criticism of France and other European countries against Turkey's democracy. This problem, which has been going on for a long time, has decreased considerably due to the rapid democratization transformation that Turkey went through between 2002-2007, which is almost like a "silent revolution", but after 2007, especially after the Gezi Park events in 2013 and after, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan It has increased again due to the authoritarian "Turkish type Presidency" system that Turkey has passed under the leadership of (Gauin, 2015, S.15).

Negative developments in Turkey, especially regarding the freedom of the press, have been followed closely by the European media. For example, journalists Can Dündar and Erdem Gül, who report on the Turkish state's arms shipments to Syria, are on trial for life imprisonment, and this is presented as a critical issue against Turkish democracy in Europe's prestigious media. French intellectuals, who previously saw and appreciated Turkey in a secular and Jacobin line inspired by the French Revolution, are also disturbed by Turkey's Islamic transformation. Turkey's breaking away from a European-style modernization process and shifting to a post-modern political paradigm centered on the Middle East and Islam is a matter that the French State and French intellectuals have difficulty getting used to (le Monde, 17.3.2017).

Some practices of the Islamist administration in Turkey that move away from democracy and the irresponsible statements made by state administrators from time to time also trigger fears and prejudices in French intellectuals. Considering that France, a secular state, has historically been close to secular groups in Turkey, the increasing

Islamism in Turkey in recent years has adversely affected bilateral relations in every way. Therefore, Turkey's move away from a democratic and secular order in the Western sense distorts Paris' view of Ankara and causes France, a democratic country, to adopt pro-Turkey or neutral attitudes on some controversial issues in international politics (Cyprus, Armenian Issue, etc.) hinders (le Figaro, 20.7.2016).

Fourth: The Cyprus issue:

Another issue that creates problems in bilateral relations and Turkey's EU membership is the Cyprus Problem, which has been going on for years. The Cyprus Problem, which prevented the opening of 8 chapters and closing other chapters in the negotiations, has reached a new stage with the election of Mustafa Akıncı to the Presidency of the TRNC in recent years, and a new hope for a solution has emerged in Cyprus (Acik, 2017, S.20). Because the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, which became a member of the EU under the name of the Republic of Cyprus, is headed by a pro-solution leader, Nikos Anastasiades. prof. Dr. According to Anne-Marie Le Gloannec; The Cyprus Problem is a critical element in Turkey's EU membership and the development of its relations with France (<https://de.ambafrance.org>.)

However, leaving the Turkish Cypriots at the mercy of the EU and the Greek Cypriots is not an easily acceptable situation for Turkey, without being a member of the union itself. Even Turkish Cypriots, who are overwhelmingly pro-solution and have proven this by voting in favor of the Annan Plan in the recent past, may be hesitant in the case of a solution without Turkey's guarantor. Recently, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus discovered new natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean and made agreements with some international companies to extract these resources, adding an economic motivation to the political will for a solution in Cyprus. The French company Total has also signed some important economic agreements with the Greek Cypriot Administration and has come to a point where it supports the energy policy of this country (Hürriyet, 9.9.2015). Considering that France gained the right to use the Andreas Papandreou Papandreou Military Air Base and Greek ports in Southern

Cyprus during the Jacques Chirac period in the early 2000s, as such the Greeks granted the French the right to use the Evangelos Florakis Base permanently (Firat, 2009, 5.5). -The proximity of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus is obvious. However, time and developments will show how persistent France can be in its energy policy in this area, due to the unsolved situation of the Cyprus Problem -proved by the Annan Plan referendum in 2004- caused by the Greek Cypriots and threats from Turkey (Açık, 2017, S. 21).

Fifth: Political Islam:

Turkey's population of approximately 82 million, almost all of whom are Muslims, causes France to be deeply concerned about the integration problem it will face in case of Turkey's membership. France, which has started to have problems integrating its Muslim population of North African origin in recent years, is openly worried and even afraid of the addition of millions of Turkish and Kurdish populations. These anxieties and fears manifest themselves in the form of Islamophobia in France. This situation is provable by the high vote rates captured by the National Front (FN) movement (Al-Khafaji, 2009, p. 96).

However, contrary to popular belief, this is not an artificial event created politically, but a sociological development that emerged at the grassroots and is largely based on integration problems. The French political elite, on the other hand, uses this situation mostly for populist reasons and especially before the elections. For example, the Islamophobic rhetoric of Marine Le Pen, which has been met by the public, has forced the centre-right to move closer to this line recently. Although the French left or center politics are more cautious in this regard than the right, there is also a negative view of fundamentalist movements in women's liberties and religious oppression in leftist politics(<http://www.ifop.com>).

Sixth: The Kurdish issue:

France is a country that has supported Kurdish activists in Turkey since the time of François Mitterrand. The Paris Kurdish Institute in France was established in the 1980s

(1983), when the Kurds as a separate society were not well known in the world. However, the PKK is naturally recognized as a terrorist organization in France (Al-Khafaji, 2009, p. 88). On the other hand, the presence of PKK members in France has been known in Turkey for years and has strained bilateral relations for a long time. The killing of 3 PKK members in France in January 2013 rekindled the discussions on this issue. French President François Hollande's statement that he knew one of the killed PKK members was met with a reaction by the Turkish Prime Minister of the time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The detention of the far-left Turkish student Sevil Cüte, who is alleged to be close to the PKK, and the controversial case of sociologist Pınar Selek, which has been going on for years, are other important issues that have been criticized in the context of the Kurdish Question in France. It is known that France, like many other European countries, invited Turkey to make more comprehensive reforms on the Kurdish Question. In this context, the reforms carried out in Turkey between 2002-2007 and the negotiations (Solution or Peace process) initiated by the National Intelligence Organization with PKK representatives and imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, starting from Oslo in 2009, were followed closely by Paris (Açık, 2017, S. 23).

However, France's view on this issue is that Turkey's reforms on the Kurdish Question are insufficient. While the official view of France supports Turkey's fight against terrorism, further reforms on the Kurdish Question are expected from this country. Although no clear position has been taken at this point, it can be claimed that the left governments in France are close to the "democratic autonomy" thesis advocated by some Kurdish political groups in Turkey. (Al-Khafaji, 2009, p. 90).

The Third Topic: Turkish-French Economic Relations

Considered as The French Chamber of Commerce in Turkey, which celebrated its 130th anniversary in 2015, is the oldest chamber of commerce abroad in France. Therefore, Turkish-French economic relations are as historical and deep-rooted as diplomatic and cultural relations (Acik, 2017, S.22).

Currently, Turkey remains one of France's largest export markets outside the EU. In the words of French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius; As of 2012, Turkey is the 5th (12th in the general table) largest commercial partner of France, with a trade size of 12.5 billion Euros, excluding some EU countries and Switzerland. As of 2017, this figure was 13.38 billion dollars (our exports to France are 6.58 billion dollars, and our imports from France are 8.71 billion dollars). The recent tender of Ankara for the nuclear power plant to be held in Sinop to the Japanese-French partnership is an important message in terms of economic relations that are suitable for further development. Relations in the tourism sector continue to strengthen. More than 1 million French tourists came to Turkey in 2012 (Fabius, 2019, S. 28).

moreover, in a survey conducted by IPSOS in December 2013, 17% of the French visited Turkey in the last 10 years and almost 40% of them visited Turkey for a short time. It turned out that they wanted to come. A recent report published by the Economic Development Foundation once again reveals the importance of economic relations. Looking at the data of 2014; It is seen that the bilateral trade volume of Turkey and France is 14.6 billion dollars in total. While Turkey's exports to France have reached 6.5 billion dollars, its imports are at the level of 8.1 billion dollars. In this context, Turkey's exports to France have increased by 200% in the last 12 years. As of 2014, among EU member states, France is the 4th country to which Turkey exports the most (after Germany, England and Italy) (örmeçi, 2016, S.157).

At the beginning of the products currently exported by Turkey to France; clothing, electrical machinery and devices, vegetables and fruits, textile products and road vehicles. Turkey's most imported products from France are; mainly land transportation vehicles, machinery and devices, iron and steel (Acik, 2017, S. 25).

As the IKV report points out, investors have an important role in reviving economic relations. In 2013, the total number of companies with French capital in Turkey reached 1,158, and between 2002 and 2014, the total of French investments in Turkey reached \$6.6 billion. French investments in Turkey; In addition to automotive, electronics,

cement, pharmacy and retail, it concentrates on various service sectors, primarily insurance (Marcou, 2016, P. 26). Among these investments are the economic activities of French companies such as Renault, PSA Peugeot Citroën, Valeo, Michelin, Carrefour, Danone, Axa, Groupama, BNP Paribas, Lafarge and Saint-Gobain, which are important brands worldwide. There has been a significant increase in the activities of Turkish companies established in France in recent years. The total value of Turkish investments in the 2002-2014 period reached 137 million dollars. Turkish companies in France; They operate in the fields of furniture, textiles and clothing, transportation, storage, logistics, chemical products (packaging), automobile spare parts production, agriculture and food products (Turan, 2017, S. 21).

Another point to be underlined; The political problems in bilateral relations have not yet emerged with a permanent effect on economic relations. This situation can be seen clearly in the tourism sector. Despite all the political problems and polemics, it has been noted that the number of tourists coming to Turkey from France exceeded 1 million in 2014. To make a general assessment; It can be stated that the strongest aspect of Turkish-French relations is economic relations. The growing power of the business world in both countries acts as a serious pressure factor on politics and helps to establish friendly relations. Economic relations are expected to intensify in the coming years (Fabius, 2019, S.29).

Conclusion

By studying the topic of the research, we can conclude several things, the most important of which are:

1. The decade of the eighties was characterized by the development of economic relations between the two countries, despite the presence of some tensions on the political side, but this did not reflect negatively on cultural and economic relations, specifically in the field of tourism.
2. French Presidents Jacques Chirac and Francois Hollande treated Turkey with great enthusiasm for full membership in the European Union, while the era of French

President Nicolas Sarkozy witnessed strong opposition to Turkey's refusal to join the European Union.

Looking ahead

French-Turkish relations are characterized by chronic tensions and geopolitical and cultural obstacles, most notably the dispute over the Eastern Mediterranean, the Kurdish issue in general, and France's recognition of the Armenian genocide claims. The clash over issues of political Islam also constitutes a major obstacle to rapprochement, despite their partnership in NATO.

List of Sources

First: Books and University Theses:

1. Açıık, E. H. (2017). Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye-Fransa İlişkileri. IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık. İstanbul.
2. Al-Khafaji, Haider Abdul-Jabbar Hassouni (2009), Political and Economic determinants of Turkiye's Relationship with The European Union, Master's Thesis, college of political Science, Al-Nahrain university.
3. Billion, D. (2012). De nouvelles perspectives dans les relations franco-turques. IRIS, Erişim Tarihi, 9.
4. Çapanoğlu, S., & Servantie, D. (2015). 2015: Fransa'ya Türk Göçünün 50'nci Yılında Türkiye-Fransa İlişkileri. İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı Değerlendirme Notu, (129).
5. Embel, E. (2005). Fransa ve Hollanda'da Düzenlenen AB Anayasası Referandumları. Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi, 60(03).
6. Fabius, L. (2012). France/Turquie-de nouveaux horizons pour une relation seculaire. Fondation Robert Schuman Policy Paper, Question d'Europe, (262), 17.
7. Fırat, M. (2009). SOĞUK SAVAŞ SONRASINDA FRANSA'NIN DIŞ POLİTİKASI. Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi, 64(01).
8. Gauin, M. (2015). Robert Fisk, Between Francophobia and Turkophobia. AVİM, Erişim Tarihi.
9. Manco, U. (2005). Turcs d'Europe et Turquie dans l'Union. Confluences Méditerranée, 52(1).
10. Marcou, J. (2016). Turquie-Europe: une relation plus ambiguë que jamais. Revue Politique et Parlementaire, (1079).
11. Ormeci, O. (2016). Yakın Dönem Türkiye-Fransa İlişkileri: Hollande Döneminde yaşanan Normalleşme.

12. Penez, A. (2006). Avrupa Birliđi Sürecinde Türkiye Fransa İlişkileri (Master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi (Turkey).
13. Schmid, D. (2014). France-Turquie: Retour d'Alliance?. Institut de Bosphore.
14. Soysal, Ismail, (2003). Türk_ fransız siyasal ilişkileri, Turkish Historical Society, Ankara.
15. Turan, Kürsad (2017). 1991-2017 Türk Fransız İlişkileri", Editör: Haydar Çakmak, Efil yayınevi yayınları.

Second: Newspapers:

- le point, 23.10.2017.
- le Mond, 5.1. 2018.
- Haber Türk, 6.1.2018
- le Mond, 27.10.2014-
- le point, 25.10.2017.
- le Monde, 17.3.2017.
- le Figaro, 20.7.2016.
- Hürriyet, 9.9.2015.

Third: Websites:

- <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>.
- <http://www.politikaakademisi.org>.
- <http://institut-bosphore.org>.
- <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.f>
- [http:// www.iris-france.org](http://www.iris-france.org).
- <http://de.ambafrance.org>.
- <http://www.ifop.com>.