

ANGLO-TURKISH RELATIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Pioneering a new research agenda on the history of UK–Turkey relations, the Institute introduced this strategic research initiative in 2015 in combination with the undertaking of a major research project entitled *Turkey and Britain 1914–1952: from enemies to allies*. The research initiative aims to build on this project in order to create an active and sustainable network of scholars from Turkey, the UK and other countries that will promote diverse approaches to the study of the early Turkish Republic, especially its foreign policy, its relationship with Britain and its place in the world order. Research and funding administered under this initiative will support diversity and collaboration across different historiographical traditions (diplomatic and military history, oral and micro history, etc.) aimed at unearthing and accessing a full range of archival and other source material from the UK, Turkey and elsewhere. The initiative’s objective is to promote the exploration of new themes significant for understanding bilateral relations in the past, as well as their development in the present and future.

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The Turkish elite’s perception of the UK from 1973 to Brexit

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Anglo-Turkish relations have entered a new phase following the Brexit referendum and the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. Distancing themselves from Europe, both countries have approached each other to increase their cooperation in security and trade. The literature on bilateral relations has mostly focused on the history of Anglo-Turkish relations, but, given contemporary developments, there is a need to analyse relations from a more present-day point of view. The main objective of my project is to examine the historical and contemporary perceptions of the Turkish elite of bilateral relations from 1973 to the present by conducting archival research and interviews in Turkey. The results of this field research should reveal and explain the main drivers of bilateral relations, contribute to the wider discipline of international relations and have an impact on the formulation of foreign policies.

Anglo-Turkish relations have historically fluctuated between animosity and partnership, as the title of a major Institute project – *Turkey and Britain 1914–1952: from enemies to allies* – perfectly summarises. British predominance in the Middle East and Balkans during the colonial era resulted in thorny relations between the Ottoman Empire and the UK, which led to them taking opposing sides during the First World War. Adversarial relations continued in the decades that followed the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, although both countries became NATO members after the Second World War. The most significant problems since then have been the withdrawal of Britain from Cyprus in 1960 and Turkey’s intervention on the island in 1974.

Despite these issues, the UK became the most fervent supporter of Turkey’s EU accession following its own membership in 1973. Britain emphasised Turkey’s geographical location and military contribution to Western security as the primary reasons why Europe would benefit from enlargement towards the east. The two countries shared similar discourses on international terrorism and domestic separatism, advocating military responses and security cooperation as the best means by which to combat these threats. Being close allies of the US, both the UK and Turkey positioned themselves in international relations differently from the other European countries. Unlike many European countries that raised concerns over immigration and human rights violations in Turkey, successive British governments did not seek to form bilateral relations to address these issues, despite the existence of a significant Turkish migrant community in the UK.

In recent years, both Turkey and the UK have gone through major transformations. Since the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, Turkey has had strained relations with its former European allies and the US. Although relations with Europe have had their ups and downs, a lingering uneasiness has led Ankara to search for new and unexpected partners in arms deals, such as Russia and China. The UK has had its fair share of major transformations as well. Long-standing disagreements within the British Conservative Party over the merits of EU membership came to a head during the 2010–2015 coalition government and led to a pledge to hold a referendum on the UK’s EU membership. The government was also influenced by a radical populist discourse in

support of Britain leaving the EU and reducing the level of immigration, including from Turkey. Indeed, the populist rhetoric during the Brexit referendum targeted Turkey's proposed membership of the EU as one of its focal points, contributing to the country's decision to leave. Ironically, however, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, the British government has started to look for new international partners outside the EU, including Turkey, for possible future trade relations.

With their previous partnerships in disarray, the UK and Turkey were partly brought together in order to augment the challenging relations each had with former associates. In the wake of the coup attempt, in September 2016, the UK Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, visited Turkey and conducted high-level diplomatic talks, stressing cooperation in security and trade. This trip was then followed by Prime Minister Theresa May's visit to President Erdoğan in January 2017, aimed at facilitating cooperation in trade, defence and security. The two countries signed an agreement valued at 100 million pounds to procure Turkish fighter jets. Taking military cooperation further, in September 2017 the Turkish Minister of EU Affairs, Ömer Çelik, hosted a reception for Turkish and UK defence-industry representatives at the Embassy in London, where he announced new collaborative ventures and the possibility of receiving military training from the British armed forces. In May 2018, in the midst of his electoral campaign, President Erdoğan visited London and met with the Queen and the Prime Minister. During this three-day visit, delegations from both countries discussed cooperation in various fields.

The main research question of my project emerged from consideration of these events: what are the historical and contemporary perceptions of Turkish politicians, diplomats and business people of bilateral relations in security, trade and migration? My analysis starts from 1973, which is the year that the UK became a member of the EU and the year before Turkey intervened in Cyprus. Both events were critical turning points in bilateral relations and, along with other momentous developments since then, have continued to influence Anglo-Turkish affairs up to the present day.

In my first research period, during August and September 2018, the Turkish National Assembly archives were examined with the help of a research assistant, Nail Elhan. Words related to 'Britain' are mentioned in the minutes of hundreds of parliamentary sessions from 1973 to 2016. Data were collected from around 750 pages of documents, containing 340,000 words. In the second phase of field research, in November and December, interviews will be conducted with former and current diplomats, politicians and business people. Transcripts from these interviews, as well as the data from the National Assembly archives, will then be analysed with theoretical and conceptual links to the discipline of international relations.

Outside of academia, the main beneficiaries of this project will be foreign-policy makers in both countries. Taking on historical and contemporary points of view, the project will also provide generalisable conclusions and benefit especially British policy makers in terms of how their country's policies are perceived from the outside, as well as how more positive perceptions can be built.

Başbakan, İngiltere'yi Türkiye'den pahalı buldu

Özal, Londra'da pazarlıkta

● İngiliz Ticaret Bakanı ile görüşen Başbakan Özal, AET'nin Türkiye'ye uyguladığı tekstil kısıtlamasının kaldırılması halinde İngiltere'den "Air-Bus" uçağı alabileceğimizi söyledi

● Başbakan, Londra'ya hareketinden önce Aziz Nesin'e çatarak "Ekin-Bılar diye bir şirket yok" dedi

HABERLERİ 9. SAYFADA



Temaslara başlandı Resmi bir ziyaret için İngiltere'nin başkenti Londra'ya giden Başbakan Turgut Özal (solda), dün İngiltere Ticaret ve Sanayi Bakanı Paul Channon ile görüştü. Bugünkü Thatcher buluşmasının provası niteliğindeki görüşmede Turgut Özal, Channon ile tekstil ihracatı ve Air-Bus uçaklarının alımı konusunu ele aldı.

Prime Minister Turgut Özal's visit to London and meeting with Minister Paul Channon is reported on the front page of *Milliyet*. Özal asked for Channon's support regarding textile exports to the European Economic Community in exchange for the purchase of Airbus planes. These sorts of deals between Turkey and Britain in their affairs with the European Union have been common. Source: *Milliyet* Newspaper Archives, 18 February 1986.