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Turkey and France Are Unfriendly Neighbors in the Mediterranean Region

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Turkey and France are not far apart on a map of the Mediterranean Sea; however, they are miles apart on political views and culture, even though both are NATO members, and Turkey's army represents the largest, and strongest of all NATO members, (after the US).

Turkey has been at odds with France over policies in Syria, Libya, the Eastern Mediterranean and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as over the publication of cartoons of Islam's Prophet Muhammad in France. Paris has led a push for EU sanctions on Turkey.

France has backed the Radical Islamic terrorists supported by the US, EU, NATO, Turkey and Qatar from the beginning of the Syrian armed conflict which began in March 2011. While France has been a victim of a number of serious terrorist attacks by people or groups following Radical Islam, which is a political ideology, they continue to support and defend the terrorists holding 3 million people hostage in Idlib, led by a former Al Qaeda turned ISIS member. It would appear, that France has a two-faced policy: terrorism in Syria is promoted, while terrorism in France is prohibited.

Turkey was the staging ground for the US-NATO project for regime change, which has failed. France and Turkey would have seemed partners, except in 2019 French **President Emanuel Macron** criticized Turkish **President Recip Tayyip Erdogan** for his invasion into north Syria in response to the Kurdish separatists who have been supported by the US and France.

In late 2019, Macron characterized NATO as possibly 'brain-dead' for allowing the invasion of Syria by Turkey, and Erdogan replied publically that Macron must be 'brain dead' after his statement. Turkey's invasion into Syria was to counter the threat of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) who are supported by the US, NATO and France, but are considered by Turkey as terrorists linked to the PKK, an internationally banned Kurdish terrorist group responsible for 30,000 deaths in Turkey over three decades.

In April 2020, with Macron facing a re-election vote, Erdogan said,

> "Macron is trouble for France. With Macron, France is passing through a very, very dangerous period. I hope that France will get rid of Macron trouble as soon as possible."

In June 2020, France accused Turkey of harassment of a French warship which tried to inspect a Turkish vessel, which was suspected of smuggling arms to Libya, in contravention of the UN arms embargo in Libya.

In October 2020, a French school teacher showed the children in his classroom cartoons which depicted the Prophet Muhammed naked, and bending over with his male genitals displayed. Later, the teacher was assassinated. After Macron insisted that the right to show pornographic cartoons humiliating Muslims to school children in France must be defended and preserved, Erdogan countered that Macron must be in need of mental treatment.

> "What else can be said to a head of state who does not understand freedom of belief and who behaves in this way to millions of people living in his country who are members of a different faith?" said Erdogan.

Macron described Islam as a religion "in crisis," and announced plans for tougher laws to tackle what he called "Islamist separatism" in France, which has an estimated six million Muslims, who according to Macron are in danger of forming a "counter-society". French Muslims have accused Macron of trying to repress their religion and say his campaign risks legitimizing Islamophobia.

In July 2021, Macron pushed for sanctions following Turkey's dispute with members Greece and Cyprus over rights to offshore resources in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In April 2023, member of the French Senate, **Laurence Cohen**, said that since there is sleeper cells of Islamic State (ISIS) and Turkish-backed armed opposition factions, aka Syrian National Army (SNA), France will increase its support for SDF. A delegation from the French Parliament and Senate visited northeast Syria and discussed economic and development projects and enhancing cooperation with the General Council of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), which is an unrecognized separatist occupied area under the Communist administration of the Kurds based in Qamishli. The French officials entered Syria illegally from Iraq and had no VISA or other legal means of entering Syria.

French Parliament member, **Marie Bouchon**, said that France will always support the Kurds, but it has to provide more support through recognizing the AANES. She added, "Europe must stand against Turkey, stop hypocrisy, liberate occupied areas and return those who were displaced from their own areas." Her comments demonstrate her ignorance of the situation, where the Kurds have forcibly driven out the actual owners of the land in the northeast through a program of ethnic-cleansing. Recently, the Arab tribes of the area have been fighting the SDF to regain their own homes, farms and businesses.

Pierre Laurent, a member of the French Senate representing the Communist Party said,

> "France must clearly condemn Turkey for its crimes, pressure to stop its hostile policies, return and protect the displaced from the occupied territories after Turkey's withdrawal, and this must be urgent."

The displaced are the Syrian Arabs and Christians who formed the majority of the northeast prior to the US-NATO support of the Kurds who used their American weapons, cash and training to drive off the non-Kurdish landowners.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Turkey and France are also at odds over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region of Azerbaijan populated by ethnic Armenians. France has supported the Armenian side, while Turkey has aligned itself with Azerbaijan. The French Senate adopted a non-binding resolution calling on France to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent state.

Lafarge

The French cement company Lafarge came under legal penalties by continuing to operate in Aleppo after terrorists had controlled the area prior to 2014. On 18 October 2022, Lafarge, which became part of Swiss-listed Holcim in 2015, pleaded guilty to US charges that it made payments to extremist groups in Syria. Bruno Lafont, the former CEO, now claims that the French intelligence service gave the orders to continue operations. This demonstrates how closely the French government, and their intelligence agents in Syria were colluding and supporting the Radical Islamic terrorists who the west used as ground troops in Syria fighting for regime change.

From the earliest stages of the conflict in Syria, major Western countries such as the US, France, and the UK have provided political, military and logistic support to the rebel groups in Syria, who were aligned with Al Qaeda and later ISIS. Today, Idlib remains the only terrorist controlled are in Syria, and the US, EU and France continue to support and defend the terrorist group, HTS, and their leader Mohammed al-Julani, formerly of ISIS.

EU Entry Delay, or Ban on Turkey?

In 2004, French President Chirac said that a vote could be made on the future of Turkey's entry into the EU. But, by 2007 the tune had changed when French President Sarkozy stated that "Turkey has no place inside the European Union." Sarkozy continued,

> "I want to say that Europe must give itself borders, that not all countries have a vocation to become members of Europe, beginning with Turkey which has no place inside the European Union."

In 2018, President Macron stated concerning Turkey, that

> "As far as the relationship with the European Union is concerned, it is clear that recent developments and choices do not allow any progression of the process in which we are engaged".

The ties holding France and Turkey together are frayed and weak. Their common denominator has been their NATO membership, and that both had been US allies following orders from Washington. However, their differences and disputes are many, and there is no sturdy bridge being built to connect the two. The US-NATO conflict in Ukraine presents yet another opportunity for divergence of opinion.

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