



## POLITICAL & CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND EGYPT (1923-1938)

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### ABSTRACT

Egypt was under Ottoman de facto rule between 1517 and 1882 for 365 years. In legal terms, however, Turkey-Egypt relations ruptured with Lausanne Agreement on 24th July 1924. After WW I, both countries were occupied by imperialist countries including England and their independence movements converged Turkish and Egyptian people. Also, the Egyptian people gave moral and material support to the Turkish National Struggle. In this context, winning of the Turkish Independence War was acclaimed enthusiastically in Egypt and gave rise to hopes that total independence would be achieved. The Egyptian press described the Turkish Independence War as a triumph of the East and Islam over the West while depicting Mustafa Kemal Pasha as “the Hero of the East” and “the Champion of Islam”. However, this positive atmosphere vanished due to such reasons as proclamation of the Republic and western revolutionary movements in Turkey. Although certain diplomatic relations were established between Turkey and Egypt in 1926, it is seen that the relations between the two countries couldn't be based on sincere friendship and trust during the period analysed in this study. Even though the relations between 1926 and 1934 didn't turn into a war, frequent tensions were experienced. Nevertheless, noticeable improvements were achieved in the relations between 1934 and 1938, the main factor of which was not actually the bilateral relations but in fact the changes in the political conjuncture of Europe from 1934 onwards. On the eve of WW II, both Egypt and Turkey gave importance to security, which also had an effect on turning the bilateral relations back into amicable terms. In this study, the relations between Turkey and Egypt between 1923 and 1938 will be presented upon T.R. Prime Ministry State Archive, T.R. Presidency Archive and English Foreign Affairs and Parliament Archive records and periodicals.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Egypt, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, King Fuad, Wafd Party

### Türk-Mısır Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkileri (1923-1938)

### ÖZET

Mısır, 1517-1882 yılları arasında 365 yıl fiili olarak Osmanlı hâkimiyetinde kalmıştır. Hukuki olarak ise 24 Temmuz 1924 tarihli Lozan Barış Antlaşması ile Türkiye-Mısır arasındaki bağlar kopmuştur. Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra da her iki ülke de başta İngiltere olmak



üzere emperyalist güçler tarafından işgal edilmişler ve başlattıkları ulusal bağımsızlık hareketleri Türkiye-Mısır halklarını birbirine yakınlaştırmıştır. Ayrıca Mısır halkı, Türk Milli Mücadelesine maddi-manevi destekte bulunmuştur. Bu bağlamda Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı'nın kazanılması da Mısır'da coşkuyla karşılanmış, Mısır'da da tam bağımsızlığın elde edileceği yönündeki umutları pekiştirmiştir. Mısır basını Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı'nı Batı'ya karşı Doğu'nun ve İslam'ın zaferi, Mustafa Kemal Paşa'yı da "Doğu'nun Kahramanı", "İslam'ın Şampiyonu" olarak betimlemiştir. Ancak bu olumlu hava Türkiye'de Cumhuriyetin ilan edilmesi ve Batıya dönük devrim hareketlerinin gerçekleştirilmesi gibi sebeplerle dağılmıştır. Her ne kadar 1926 yılında Türkiye ile Mısır arasında diplomatik ilişkiler kurulmuş olsa da incelediğimiz dönemde iki ülke ilişkilerinin samimi dostluk ve güven esasına oturtulmadığı görülmektedir. 1926-1934 yılları arasında ilişkiler, savaşa dönüşme de gerginlikler sıklıkla yaşanmıştır. Ancak 1934-1938 yılları arasında Türk-Mısır ilişkilerinde gözle görülür bir iyileşme olmuştur. İki ülke yakınlaşmasında 1934 yılı itibarıyla ikili ilişkilerden ziyade, ana etmen Avrupa'nın siyasal konjonktüründe meydana gelen değişimlerdir. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın arifesinde hem Türkiye'nin hem de Mısır'ın güvenliğe önem vermeleri ikili ilişkilerin dostane bir havaya bürünmesinde etkili olmuştur. Çalışmamızda T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivi, T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Arşivi ve İngiliz Dışişleri ve Parlamento Arşivi belgelerinden ve süreli yayınlardan yararlanarak 1923-1938 arası Türk-Mısır ilişkileri irdelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Mısır, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Kral Fuad, Vefat Partisi.

### *1. Introduction*

Egypt, due to its rich strategic location in terms of trade resources and waterways, has always attracted the attention of great powers and has thus been a critical battleground. Having been under rule of Romans, Byzantians, the Tulunids, the Abbasids, the Ikhshidids, the Fatimids, the Ayyubids and the Mamluks respectively, Egypt came under the rule of Ottomans as a result of Battle of Ridaniya in 1517 between the Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Selim and Mamluk Sultan Tomanbay (Uzunçarşılı, 1988, p. 287-297).

However, when the Ottoman Empire started to decline, Egypt became a rivalry ground for European powers. First France and then England invaded its land. France occupied Egypt in 1798 to cut its ties with India, a colony of England (Hoskins, 1957, p. 73), but Napoleon couldn't stand up to the Russia-Ottoman-England alliance and the Ottoman-led army established in Syria and therefore had to go back to France in 1799 (Hitti, 1957). Although France, taking advantage of Mehmet Ali Pasha's riot, re-attempted to dominate the area, it failed again in the face of the Russia-Ottoman-England alliance. While England considered Mehmet Ali Pasha's march to Hejaz, Yemen and Persian Gulf as a threat for the India route, Russia regarded it as a threat for the Straits and thus, both powers backed the Ottoman Empire (Sarıkoyuncu Değerli, 2008a, p. 4).

Having started in 1798, the English-French conflict over Egypt intensified with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 by France through permission of the Ottoman Empire (Armaoğlu, 1975, p. 222). England tried to sabotage the canal opening attempt, but failed (PRO, FO 423/12). Hence, thanks to the Suez Canal project, France was able to cut the connection route of England with its colonies. On the other hand, losing this connection, England invaded Egypt on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1882 to seize the Suez Canal (PRO, FO 423/11).

Invasion of Egypt by England was protested by the Ottoman, Russian and French governments. Nevertheless, thinking that there wasn't another power capable of ousting it, England didn't step back (PRO, CAB 17/58). At the same time, England didn't want to cut its relations with the Ottomans entirely either, so it overlooked the existence of an Ottoman High



Commissioner in Egypt. Even though just on paper, Egypt remained as Ottoman land until 5<sup>th</sup> November 1914 (BCA 30.10/266.295.17). Subsequently, after the Ottomans entered WW I in favour of Germany, declaring that it terminated the Ottomans' right of independence on Egypt unilaterally, England took Egypt under rule.

However, this fait accompli of England caused reactions from the Egyptian people and fuelled Egyptian nationalism such that small-scale nationalistic uprisings arose in Egypt in 1881 and 1882 against the English rule under the leadership of Ahmed Urabi Pasha. Later, Muhammed Ahmed İbnü's Seyyid Abdullah, proclaiming himself as the Mahdi in 1881, rose against Egypt and the English colonial administration (Massie, 1991). When England started to use Egypt as a military base during WW I and the economic grievances of the War exacerbated, the protests of the Egyptian people increased (Tignor, 1966, p.392). Prior to WW I, the Wafd party was established by Egyptian nationalists in the leadership of the Minister of Justice, Said Zağlul (Saad Zaghloul) Pasha.

The Wafd Party regarded the fact that the "fourteen points" of the US President Wilson on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1918, in which he declared the foundations of the peace after the war, were accepted by the Allied Powers (LG/F/51/1/16) as an important step for gaining their independence. In this context, a delegation formed by Said Zağlul in November 1918 appealed to the British High Commissioner of Egypt, Sir Reginald Wingate, to plead their case- the independence of Egypt- in the Peace Conference in London within the framework of Wilson Principles; however, when England didn't accept this request of the delegation, the Prime Minister of Egypt resigned on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1919 and Said Zağlul and three friends of his were exiled to Malta on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1919. Thereupon, the protests in Cairo and Alexandria spread to the other cities on the Nile delta and mass strikes started within a week (Yılmaz, 2009, p. 101). England, upon realizing that it would not be able to maintain the order in Egypt, proclaimed Egypt an independent country with a unilateral declaration on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1922. However, since the agreement allowed England to interfere with the domestic and foreign issues of Egypt, Egypt's independence remained formal (Debb, 1979). Hıdiv I. Ahmed Fuad, accepting England to maintain the right to defend the Suez Canal and the foreigner rights in Egypt, was declared to be the King on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1922, after which the Egyptian nationalists continued their independence struggle against both England and I. Fuad, who was supported by England.

Despite the British oppression, Egyptian people gave their moral and material support to Turkish people, who were struggling against the imperialist powers like them, from the early days of Turkish National Struggle, which gave rise to establishment of close relations between the two nations. In 1921, Egyptian Red Crescent donated Ankara Agency of Ottoman Red Crescent 37.250 liras to be given to the villagers who had suffered from the Greek occupation (Bulut, 2010, p. 539) and again in 1922, they donated 5000 liras (PRO, FO 141/514/2). Also, the Egyptian Prince Mehmet Ali Hasan gave 38 aeroplanes to the Turkish Army (Cum. Arş. K:1/33, Fh:73). Two major factors that urged Egyptian people to support the Turkish National Struggle were that the bad memories of the acts of the Ottoman administration in the Egyptian people's mind, who had remained under the Ottoman rule for 365 years, and that Sultan Vahdettin was regarded as traitor by the Egyptian nationalists because he favoured the British (Hattamer, 2000). Therefore, winning of the Turkish Independence War was acclaimed enthusiastically in Egypt and gave rise to hopes that total independence would be achieved. The Egyptian press described the Turkish Independence War as a triumph of the East and Islam over the West while depicting Mustafa Kemal Pasha as "the Hero of the East" and "the Champion of Islam" (Şimşir, 1919).



Despite the positive developments mentioned between the two countries, the political ties between the new Turkish Nation and Egypt vanished due to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> terms of the Lausanne Agreement (Meray, 2001, p.6-7).

## 2. Political Relations

The new Turkish State was acknowledged in the international arena with 24<sup>th</sup> July 1924 dated Lausanne Agreement. On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1923, Republic, the symbol of popular sovereignty and democracy, was declared. Afterwards, Turkey turned its face to the West and embarked on certain revolutionary movements of modernisation in the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In this context, on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1924, three laws, called “*the laws that would secularize Turkey*”, were accepted by TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly). These were the 429-numbered law to abolish Şer’iyye ve Efkaf Vekaleti and Erkan-ı Harbiye-i Umumiye Başkanlığı (the Ministry of Religion and Foundations and the Office of Commander in Chief), the 430-numbered Tevhid-i Tedrisat law on unification of education and the 431-numbered law to abolish Caliphate and exile the Ottoman Dynasty out of the Turkish republic land. On 17<sup>th</sup> February 1926, Turkish Civil Code was accepted. With the 25<sup>th</sup> November 1925 dated and 671-numbered law, the Hat Reform replaced the old headwear with hat. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1925, the Decree about the dress of religious officials was published and with 30<sup>th</sup> November 1925 dated and 677-numbered law, such religious titles as sheikh, dervish, mürit (disciple), dede (senior dervish), sayyid, çelebi (educated person) were banned as well as closing tekkes (dervish lodges), zaviyals and türbes (shrines). On 9<sup>th</sup> April 1928, the clause in the 2<sup>nd</sup> article of the Constitution that “the state religion is islam” was abated. Besides the acceptance of the international numbers, Code of Obligations was accepted on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1928 and Criminal Code went in effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1928. Meanwhile, abolishing the Şer’iyye (religious) Courts on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1924 prior to the adoption of Civil Code and abolishing the Şer’iyye Department of Yargıtay (Supreme Court of Appeal) were also among the critical legal arrangements (Sarıkoynucu Değerli, 2008b, p. 376-378).

Efforts to internch the Revolution continued after 1928. Turkish woman, who got rid of being a second class citizen who had to be covered or avoided, got the right to attend municipal elections on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1930, which was followed by other improvements for her to participate in the state government. Turkish women, who could now be elected as village headman and to the vestry from 26<sup>th</sup> October 1933 on, gained the right to elect and be elected as deputy with the Constitutional amendmend on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1934. Moreover, with the 2525-numbered “*Surname Act*” in November 1934, titles and by-names were abolished. Also, with the Constitutional amendmend on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1937, Secularity, having started to be applied de facto since 1928, gained its place in the Turkish Republic Constitution as a principle (Sarıkoynucu Degerli, 2008b).

Egypt, in the meantime, after Ahmed Fuad’s acclaming himself the King on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1922, changed into constitutional monarchy when Egyptian Constitution was put in force on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1923. England had a great role in Fuad’s adopting this administration style. In return, King Fuad made numerous concessions to England on Egypt’s economic independence through agreements between 1922 and 1936. These concessions later led to breaching of Egypt’s sovereignty rights by England and Egypt almost turned into commonwealth of England. Since it was under English control, Egypt didn’t have the freedom to form close relations with Turkey. Therefore, Turkey-Egypt relations existed in the shadow of Turkey-England relations (Vere-Hodge, 1950, p.88). In such an atmosphere, when Egypt’s request to start diplomatic relations was accepted by the Turkish government in January 1925, the first diplomatic relations between the two countries were established by appointing the Cairo Governor Muhammed Heddaya Pasha to Ankara as Egyptian Minister Plenipotentiary



on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1925 and Mihittin Pasha (Akyüz) to Cairo as Turkish Minister Plenipotentiary (Şimşir, 1984).

Despite these diplomatic efforts, political relations between the two countries were far from the expected level, which continued until 1934. In those years, one of the most crucial factors preventing close and sincere relations between Egypt and Turkey was regime disparity because the reforms in Turkey, especially abolishment of caliphate on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1924, were criticised harshly by the Egyptian people with the worry of the fact that it might lead to a breakup within the Islam community. Such a reaction persisting until 1926 caused tension in the relations between the two countries (Şimşir, 1999, p.176-177). In this period, Turkish press released severe criticism on Egyptian government because they opposed to the Turkish reforms. Moreover, such harsh expressions as “*Egyptians are not meant to govern but to be governed*” appeared in the press (Aydın Tarihi, August 1926, p. 1467). It was also expressed that because the internal affairs of Egypt was disordered, they were under English control and Egyptians had been for centuries and were then living under mandate, their mentality didn’t flourish and their perspective remained narrow, all of which prevented them from grasping the Turkish reforms (Aydın Tarihi, February 1926, p. 1012-1018). In this context, opinions of western writers were also included, the most prominent one of which was the article “Spiritual and Political Revolutions in Islam” by Felix Valyi written in 1925. This article, highlighting the greatness of the reforms in Turkey and how deeply they affected the Islam world, was translated into Turkish and published (Aydın Tarihi, March 1926, p. 7076-7086). Meanwhile, King Fuad proclaimed himself the Caliph; however, not being accepted by the other Islam countries, he gave up. King Fuad considered Turkey the reason for the reaction to his Caliphate from the other Muslim countries (Şimşir, 1999).

Despite the tense atmosphere mentioned above, the six-month duration of the trade agreement between Turkey and Egypt signed in January 1926 on the basis of “Most Favoured Nation” was extended in January 1927 (Bulut, 2010, p.549). Also, by participating in the Congress of the Islamic World in July 1926 in Mecca, Turkey showed its goodwill to Arab countries (Okur, 2011, p. 202). Thanks to such developments, 1927 passed in a positive atmosphere (PRO, FO 371/E 1149/44/17). In fact, the Egyptian King Fuad, during his Italy visit in 1927, said to the Turkish Ambassador that the two nations were brothers and that Egypt regarded Turkey as elder brother while Servet Pasha, the Prime Minister of Egypt, told the Turkish Ambassador that he loved Turkey very much (BCA, 030.10/266.795.10). In 1927, upon the death of Said Zaglül, he was succeeded by another nationalist Nasah Pasha as the chairman of Wafd Party. In the early 1928, the relations between the two countries went well both because Nasah Pasha got the chair despite English opposition and because the Egyptian nationalists opposed to England by not signing the Nile Water Agreement, which regulated the water shares of Egypt and African countries. Because Turkey, thinking that it was struggling to get rid of the English rule, sided with Egypt (PRO, FO 371/E90644/18). This gesture of Turkey’s wasn’t unreturned by Egypt and it took a defensive attitude for Turkey against its own media organs that broadcast to the detriment of Turkey. For example, at the request of Cairo Turkish Embassy, the newspaper “Seda-yı Hak”, which had a tone daring outrageous insults to Turkey, was closed (BCA 30.10/266.795.14). Moreover, Hafız İsmail<sup>1</sup>, the owner and former

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<sup>1</sup> Hafız İsmail was the 99th of the 150 personae non gratae of Turkey, which is the name of those Turkish citizens who were exiled from Turkey due to their cooperation with the enemy during the Turkish Independence Struggle. The list had initially consisted of 600 people; however, according to the Lausanne Agreement, the number of the exiles was not to exceed 150. Therefore, it was decreased to 150 and was accepted by TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly) on 24th April 1924. Although the law preventing the 150 personae non



editor of the newspaper “Müsavat Gazetesi” and who was among the 150 personae non gratae of Turkey (known as Yüzellilikler in Turkish, literally, Hundredandfiftyers), was summoned to Cairo Governor’s office to be warned sternly and then even to be expelled from the dervish lodge he was living in. Similarly, an enquiry was launched about another anti-Turkish newspaper “El-Feth Gazetesi” (BCA 30.10/266.295.12). However, this positive atmosphere vanished when Ghazi Mustafa Kemal didn’t send a telegram to celebrate King Fuad’s acceding to the throne and his birthday. Since King Fuad knew that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was against monarchy, he showed his discomfort responding by not sending a telegram to celebrate 23<sup>rd</sup> April National Sovereignty and Children's Day. He also forbade Egyptian bureaucrats from participating in the receptions at Turkish representative offices in Cairo (PRO, FO. 371/E90644/18).

Just as it is today, 1929 started tense due to the attitudes and behaviours of the leaders of the two countries. Unlike 1928, advocates of caliphate and sultanate- especially the 150 personae non gratae of Turkey including Hafız İsmail, Sheikh ul-Islam Mustafa Sabri<sup>2</sup>- were supported by Egypt. In fact, besides overlooking the anti-Turkish ideas of Hafız İsmail, Egypt also enabled his newspaper “Müsavat Gazetesi” published in Cairo to penetrate into Turkey through various ways (BCA 30.10/107.697.1).

On the other hand, Egypt also let Sheikh ul-Islam Mustafa Sabri, who felt free to declare that the Egyptians advocating the Turkish reforms disappointed him deeply, disseminate and rally supporters for his ideas that could be summarized as the following: “The reforms in Turkey are in fact Western imitations openly and secretly. The new Turkish Republic is irreligious since it is imitating the West and it separated religion from politics although these two are inseparable. If they are separated, the state and the nation will be atheist. In this respect, the government in Turkey is apostate (mürted) and the nation approving such a government is infidel (kafir) upon the principle “*infidelity consent is infidelity*”. Wearing a hat is invective in both religious and national aspects. Abolishment of caliphate is a British intrigue.” Such accusations of a Turkish religious scholar towards the Turkish Republic and the Turkish Nation as atheist had an effect on the Muslim nations’, especially Egyptians, negative attitudes towards Turkey (Akbulut, 1992, p.37-38). Therefore, in order to dispel the negative atmosphere against Turkey in Egypt and in other Muslim countries, Turkey had to resort to appointing Sheikh Servet Akdağ<sup>3</sup>. Between 1927 and 1937, upon the special order of Atatürk

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gratae of Turkey from returning back to Turkey was annulled on 28th June 1938, many opponents and advocates of sultanate- especially Çerkez Ethem- didn’t turn back to Turkey. For more information, see Soysal, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Sabri Efendi (1869-1954) was among the founders of Ahali Fırkası (Party) in 1910 and Hürriyet (Liberty) and İtilaf (Entente) Fırkası (Party) in 1919. He was the shaykh al-islam in the government which Damat Ferid Pasha founded on 4th March 1919. He also presided Cemmiyyet-i Müderrisin, which had been established on 19th February 1919 and was then turned into Teali-i İslam Cemiyeti (Union). He advocated signing the Treaty of Sevres at the Şura-yı Saltanat (Sultan’s Consul Meeting). When the measures he had recommended against the National Struggle weren’t taken, he resigned in September 1920. After the declaration of the Republic, he was included into the list of 150 personae non gratae of Turkey. On 1st June 1924, he was denaturalised and went to Egypt, where he had continued opposing the new Turkish Republic by publishing various books and journals and died on 12th March 1954 in Cairo.

<sup>3</sup> Şeyh (Sheikh) Servet Akdağ was born in 1880 in Tosya and died on 10th June 1962 in İzmir. He served as MP from Bursa during the 1st period of TBMM. He had great contributions to the National Struggle and annexation of Hatay to Turkey. For more information, see Sarıkoyuncu, 2007, p. 105-108.



as goodwill ambassador, this man strived for promoting Turkey in Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, India and Pakistan (Sarıkoyuncu, 2007).

Meanwhile, the Egyptian government enacted the “Nationality Law” on 26th May 1928 and 11th February 1929 and accepted the foreigner citizens living in Egypt as Egyptian subjects, but made those who didn’t want to give up their own citizenship leave Egypt within a year. Financial, legal and social problems broke out between Turkish citizens and the Egyptian government because of this law. Turkey requested protection of the status of the Turkish citizens living in Egypt upon 19<sup>th</sup> article<sup>4</sup> of the Treaty of Lausanne. The Egyptian government granted this right to the Moroccans, Tripoli citizens and Germans living in Egypt through agreements with France, Italy and Germany respectively but discriminated against Turks, which offended the Turkish government (BCA 30.10/266.795.17). It was even contemplated not to send the Egyptian Ambassador Muhittin Pasha, who was on holiday in Ankara at that moment, back to Egypt. While on the way back to Cairo, Muhittin Pasha requested appointment with King Fuad, who was on holiday in Alexandria at that moment, to talk about the case of karma mahkeme (common court), but was turned down on the grounds of the King’s illness. Muhittin Pasha managed to get the appointment with the King upon arriving in Cairo, but this time, he was not accepted at the appointment time and was made to wait in the hall, upon which Muhittin Pasha returned back to Cairo after “*slamming the door in the face of the authorities*”. This behavior of the Ambassador deepened the tension that had already been going on between the two countries. This diplomatic crisis was settled only after Muhittin Pasha gave his official apologies to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry (Akça, 2005, p.1176). Meanwhile, Mustafa Kemal sent a celebration telegram for the anniversary of King Fuad’s ascending the throne on 9th October 1929 (Cum.Arş., K:1/119, Fh:46).

Between 1930 and 1931, the relations between the two countries were still tense due to Turkey’s opium production. USA started to put pressure on Turkish governments from 1923 onwards because of Turkey’s significant amount of high quality opium production (Uzun, 2009). Turkey didn’t sign the Geneva Opium Convention on 19th February 1925, which would have restricted opium production to medical requirements only. Also, when Turkey continued its policy in this way, USA increased its pressure in 1930. In those years, Egypt was suffering from serious opium addiction and reacted to Turkey at governmental level with the manipulation of USA (Erdoğan, 2004). Furthermore, the news that most of the drugs sold in Egypt and USA came from Turkey (BCA 030.10/180.243.8) caused fierce reaction in Egyptian public against Turkey. This reaction gave rise to invective articles and cartoons in Egyptian press about Turkey, the most attention-grabbing of which was published in the weekly humour magazine “El Keşkül”, in the 26<sup>th</sup> December 1930 dated issue of which it was not only stated that opium smuggling in Turkey brought 7 million liras to Turkish budget and the issue would be dealt with the League of Nations, but Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s personality was also humiliated with a cartoon: “... on the front page, a rather disgusting and insolent cartoon showing the President Mustafa Kemal with a bag in his hands full of opium selling it for money was published with the following written below: to the question addressed to him “Hey Ghazi Highness! Will your religion Islam be intact with all these drugs?” he replied “You fools! Our religion is money.”” (BCA 030.10/180.243.8).

Right after the publishment of the cartoon, Cairo Ambassador Muhittin Pasha delivered the discomfort of Turkey about the issue to Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdülfettah Yahya Pasha. Yahya Pasha condoled with him using soothing expressions and requested not to take it serious since it was a humour magazine (BCA 030.10/180.243.8). Nevertheless, Egypt

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<sup>4</sup> According to the 19th term, the challenges due to recognizing Egypt would be solved through the terms to be determined later among the related parties.



pursued its netaive attitudes until 15th February 1931, when Turkey issued a decree on production and exporting of drugs and made relevant regulations that would limit opium production and exportation, after which there was a thaw in the relations between the two countries. Indeed, the decree in question was regarded highly and with great appreciation in Egypt, leading to articles in their national newspapers full of praise to Turkey's such efforts (BCA 030.10/266.796.14; BCA 030.10/180.243.18; BCA 030.10/180.243.11; BCA 030.10/178.230.3; BCA 030.10/180.243.12; BCA 030.10/180.243.17; BCA 030.10/178.230.2; BCA 030.10/180.244.1). The following words of Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü in his interview with Ustaz Mahmut Abulfeth Bey from El-Ahram Newspaper on 21st October 1931 *"... I feel priviledged to express our genuine and sincere friendly feelings for Egypt through El-Ahram Newspaper, the biggest newspaper of Egypt. We are far from any idea that could be opposed to the national wishes of Egypt; on the contrary, we would be gald to strive as much as we can for accomplishing those national wishes of this fellow nation"* (BCA 30.10/266.796.6) showed that the matter was settled between the two countries.

Having experienced a thaw in the late 1931, the relations between the two countries became tense again during the "Fez Crisis" in October 1932, when Egyptian Ambassador Abdülmelik Hamza Bey left the reception dinner of the Anniversary of the Turkish Republic for foreigner mission chiefs on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1932 because Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk made him take off his fez. There are various rumours about how the case had happened. According to Bilal Şimşir, during the reception in Ankara Palas Hotel, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal told Egyptian Ambassador Hamza Bey seated in fez at dinner table *"Tell your King, I, Mustafa Kemal, ordered you this evening to take your fez off"* and a waiter was called and took the fez (Şimşir, 1984). Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü (Aras) reported that the Ambassador Hamza Bey had got hot and for his comfort, Mustafa Kemal Paşa allowed him to take off his fez (Şimşir, 1984). According to G. Clerk, Ankara Ambassador of England, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hit Hamza Bey's fez with his hand and made it fall while they were leaving the reception saying *"Tell your King that Mustafa Kemal Paşa told you not to wear the fez in such a significant evening"* and a waiter was called to take the fez away (Özgiray, 1996, p.4). No matter how it had happened, the case was reflected first to the British and then to the Egyptian press, which aggravated the crisis. When the Ambassador Hamza Bey reported the incidence to his country, Egypt sent Turkey a letter of protest demanding assurance that such an event would not be repeated, upon which Turkey sent a formal reply in a soft tone that it wouldn't. However, this response of the Turkish government didn't defuse the tension, whereupon the English high commissioner in Cairo intervened and reconciliation was achieved (Özgiray, 1996, p.4). Also, the Turkey-Egypt Trade and Settlement Agreement scheduled for those days was postponed (Özgiray, 1996).

Although Turkey-Egypt relations softened in the late 1932, in 1933 they remained overshadowed by the "Fez Crisis". Mustafa Kemal Atatürk went to the Egypt Embassy on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1993 under the pretext of visiting the Charge D'affaires probably to live down the case. Also, on the same day, he attended the reception at the Embassy for King Fuad's birthday (PRO. F.O. 371/17959/188083/9). Meanwhile, he also sent King Fuad a birthday telegram (Cum.Arş., Bilg.No:1007776, K:1/120, Fh:30). His visit and the telegram had positive effects on the relations. However, the fact that the Egyptian governmental representatives didn't attend the reception of Turkey's Cairo Ambassador Şevki Bey in Cairo for the 10th anniversary of the Turkish Republic on 29th October 1933 on the excuse that the ministerial meeting had been extended showed that the Egyptian government's resentment was still going on. Besides this resentment, among the other cases causing problems between the two countries were to whom the trust revenues in Egypt would be given in Turkey and that the Turkish citizens living in Egypt were maltreated in corts and prisons (PRO. F.O.



371/17959/188083/9). Both the reluctant attitudes of the Egyptian government in solving these problems and the Egyptian governmental representatives' not attending the reception on 29th October led to discontent in the Turkish government.

A remarkable recovery was seen in the relations between Turkey and Egypt between 1934 and 1938; however, from 1934 onwards, the main factor in this recovery was more the changes in the political conjuncture of Europe than a convergence between the two countries. In this period, Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany started to follow an imperialist policy. Both countries became really concerned especially when Mussolini openly declared during the II<sup>nd</sup> Fascist Congress in March 1934 that Italy's historical ambition was to seize Asia and Africa and afterwards Italy started to expand its influence zone in the Mediterranean. England, the mandatory state of Egypt in a way, was also concerned about such an offensive attitude of Italy. In the circumstances, Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras appealed to the English Ambassador Sir Percy Loraine in Ankara to strengthen the relations between Turkey and Egypt. Moreover, Loraine, who had also been the English High Commissioner of Egypt and Sudan between 1926 and 1934, had significant contributions in the development of Turkey-Egypt relations and even performed a sort of arbitrator duty during the meetings between the two countries for Turkey-Egypt Friendship, Residence and Citizenship Agreement (PRO. F.O. 371/E 854/14135/13). Although this agreement was signed later on 7th April 1937, it was reflected in the press that the negotiations were positive and that the Egyptian government accepted the representation rights of the Turkish Consuls for the Turkish citizens living in Egypt just as the consuls of the other nations utilizing capitulations (Zaman, 4th September 1934, p. 2). This positive atmosphere was seen to be reflected to the 30th Conference of the Parliaments starting on 24th September 1934 in Yıldız Palace in İstanbul (Cumhuriyet, 07.09.1934, p. 1; Cumhuriyet, 21.09.1934, p.2). During this conference, the Egyptian Representative and President of Egypt Parliament Rıfat Pasha asked the abolishment of capitulations in Egypt and the Turkish Representative Kazım Pasha backed up Egypt despite the opposition of England (Zaman, 24th September 1934, p. 1). At the end of the conference, Rıfat Pasha thanked Turkey for its support and added that he was leaving Turkey with positive impressions about Turkey and its reforms. Similarly, the Head of Egyptian Parliament Committee Muhammed Tevfik Rıfat Pasha expressed his admiration to Turkey under the command of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Zaman, 3 Teşrinî Evvel (October) 1934, p.7).

On the other hand, the Egyptian Ambassador Hamza Bey, who rarely stayed in and never came to Ankara unless necessary after the "Fez Crisis", was replaced with Moftı El-Gazzaerly (Özgiray, 1996). The new Ambassador started his office with a letter of trust to Atatürk on 28th October 1935, which also softened the relations between the two countries (Şimşir, 1999, p. 318). In the late 1935, giving in the pressures of the Nationalist wing, King Fuad revived the 1923 Constitution and died four years later. He was succeeded by his 16-year-old son Faruk I<sup>st</sup> and the nationalist Wafd Party won the 1936 election. As a result of the negotiations between the Wafd Party and England, Egypt got rid of its semi-independence status from 1922 and acquired total independence with the Alliance Agreement signed between Egypt and England on 26th August 1936. With this Alliance Agreement, England ceased the invasion of Egypt, but Egypt was made to allow England to keep its soldiers at the Suez Canal permanently. Such developments in the internal and foreign policy of Egypt led to positive results in terms of the relations between Turkey and Egypt.



In this context, after Egypt acquired total independence in 1936, Turkey gave full support for Egypt's appeal to entering the Nations League (PRO. F.O. 371/E 823/44/18)<sup>5</sup> and Atatürk sent a letter of condolence to Prince Faruk upon King Fuad's death (Cum.Arş., K:1/130, Fh:40), both of which pulled at the heartsstrings of Egyptians. Also, the Queen of Egypt Nazlı sent a letter of thanks to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk for the attendance of the Turkish Ambassador to the funeral as Extraordinary Envoy (Cum.Arş.,K:1/130, Fh:48). This convergence in the relations was put in writing with the "Turkey-Egypt Friendship Agreement" on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1937. Besides this agreement, Residence Agreement and Citizenship Covenant were also signed on the same day (Soysal, 1999, p. 528-529). With this Friendship Agreement signed by Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras and the Turkey Ambassador of Egypt Muhammed El-Cezayirli, the facts that there would be a permanent friendship between Turkey and Egypt and that the diplomats and consuls of both parties would benefit from all privileges bilaterally were decreed (Cum.Arş.,K:-, Fh:9). The agreement went into effect during the Cairo visit of Turkish Foreign Minister on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1938. This agreement also raised the fluctuating relations between the two countries to the desired friendship level (Akça, 2005).

### 3. Cultural Relations

The cultural relations between Turkey and Egypt followed a parallel path to the political relations between the two countries. In this context, no other remarkable cultural activities of Turkey were seen in Egypt than the media organs Turkey used for positive propaganda during 1923-1934, when the relations were tense. The first of these media organs was the weekly newspaper published by Hüseyin Remzi Bey in Cairo in the 1930s called first "Muahadenet" and then "Yeni Türkiye". The other was the daily bulletin called "An Anba-ul Şarkiya" published by Ziya Danişman, a reporter of Anadolu Agency. Activities of neither media organ could achieve the effect desired by the Turkish Government and they were terminated in 1937 (Bulut, 2000, p.554). However, it is understood that the Turkish Government also tried to get in close contact with some media organs in Egypt. For example, a letter of thanks was sent to Abdülkadir Hamza, the owner of Elbelağ newspaper and the Chairman of Egypt Press Society, on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1935 for his continuous publications in favour of Turkey by the General Directorate of Press (Cum.Arş.,K:1/209, Fh:24). On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1936, Abdülkadir Hamza sent the following reply; "... *Your graceful letter inspired mutual brotherhood and sincere feelings in my soul and among the authors of the El-Belağ newspaper. Egyptians welcome the Turkish reforms with admiration thanks to the centuries old ties between Egypt and Turkey. These ties will be reinforced by blood unity and mutual interests between Turks and Egyptians... We are hereby privileged to submit our respect to Atatürk, the hero of the east and the symbol of reformism.*" (Cum.Arş.,K:1/209, Fh:24).

On the other hand, a great majority of Egyptian intellectuals felt admiration to both Atatürk and the new, modern and secular Turkey, established after an Independence War against imperialist powers. In this context, the Nutuk by had great repercussions in Egypt and therefore, on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1927 Cairo Ambassador of Turkey even requested the French and English translations of the Nutuk from the Private Secretariate of Presidency. Besides, there were publications in favour of the Nutuk and Mustafa Kemal (Cum.Arş.,K:1/304, Fh:12). Moreover, the admiration of the Egyptian intellectuals for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

<sup>5</sup> Before replying to the request of Turkey's help for Egypt to be admitted to the League of Nations, the consent of the English Government was sought through the Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras appealing to Sir Percy Loraine- the English Ambassador in Ankara.



was also appreciated by the western statesmen. For instance, American Ex-Ambassador General Sherrill expressed his impressions during Egypt and Palestine visits as follows<sup>6</sup>:

<sup>6</sup> The author of the book “Kamal-Roosevelt-Mussolini” General Sherrill, also the Ex-Ambassador of America, brought a copy of his book in Italian to Paris Embassy to be presented to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and also relayed his impressions during his Egypt and Palestine visits to the Paris Ambassador of Turkey. The Ambassador then delivered them to the Turkish President on 14th May 1936 (Hasan Rıza Soyak-Riyaseticuhmur Katibi Umumisi (General Clerk of the Presidency)).

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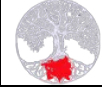
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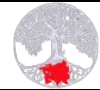
*“All the fellows belonging to various social stratum I have met here are convinced that progress and development in these countries will only be thanks to Atatürk. Atatürk’s fame and reputation here are unmatched. All the hopes are attached to him. They say that they can achieve their prosperity only thanks to Atatürk. These words have left deep impression and influence on me.”* (Cum.Arş., Bilg.No:1012711, K:1/232, Fh:16).

As is known, the Egyptian intellectuals were influenced by the Turkish reforms and wanted to achieve a similar reform act in their own country. For instance, after the hat reform in Turkey in 1925, long debates were experienced in Egypt for replacing fez with modern hat. Again in the 1930s, while performing the language reform in Egypt, Selma Musa dared to suggest replacing the Arabic letters with Latin ones taking courage from the Letter Reform in Turkey in 1928 (Aydın, 1993, p.117-118).

Besides the Reform Movement, in order to overcome the 1929 Global Economic Crisis, Turkey resorted to harsh economic measures and followed a liberal policy as well as standing upright against the West while reconstructing the country, all of which were regarded with appreciation in Egypt. In this respect, it is remarkable that the Essiyasiye Newspaper published a long article on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1930 titled *“Turkey And Loan: The Economic Policy Of The Government, The Financial Depression Is About To Be Overcome”* and thus Egypt analyzed the Turkish economic policy (BCA 030.10/166.155.13).

After 1934, the convergence between the two countries was reflected to the press and articles started to appear in the Egyptian press praising Mustafa Kemal Paşa and the modernization process of Turkey. For example, it was emphasized in the article titled *“About Turkey’s Great Reforms”* in the El-Siyasiye Newspaper on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1934 that thanks to the Turkish Reforms, Turkey was nationalized and gained a modern image (BCA 490.01/607.102.6). Some other articles praising the Turkish Government were also published on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1934 in the El Eham, with the biggest reader mass among Egyptian newspapers, and on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1934 in the Kevkebuşark Newspaper. It was pointed out in these articles that after the atrocities Jews had suffered from in Poland, no Jews were maltreated or exiled in Turkey during the National Struggle period, but rather, those exiled from Germany were welcomed by Turkey (BCA 30.10/110.734.12). Again in another article titled *“Gördüğüm Mustafa Kemal ve Müşarünileyhin Evsaf ve Sadeliği”* in the El Mukattam Newspaper dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1934, a lot of praise was stated about Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s personality, patriotism and modestness. Also, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal was likened to the leader of Egyptian national struggle Said Zaglül Pasha. This comparison is a clear indication of their admiration to both hem Mustafa Kemal and the new Turkish State, with a modern, secular and democratic base (BCA 030.10/84.554.3). In the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1934 dated article of the same newspaper titled *“Why do Turks love the Ghazi?”* Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s self-devotion, valour, farsightedness and patriotism since the National Struggle were emphasized (BCA 30.10/84.554.3).

Besides Mustafa Kemal, it is understood that the Egyptian press was also interested in İsmet İnönü, the Prime Minister of the time. For example, Fuad Sarruf from El Mukaddem Newspaper visited the Prime Minister İsmet İnönü in 1934 and then wrote an article in favour of Turkey (BCA 30.10/84.554.4). Again, on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1934 in an article in El Keşkül Newspaper titled *“Foreign Policy of Turkey as Described in İsmet Pasha’s Latest Speeches,”* it was emphasized through quotations from İsmet İnönü’s speeches that aims and ideals of the foreign policy of Turkey achieved solid and permanent peace and it was also expressed that



Turkey's prestige in Egypt had risen over that last decade thanks to the modernization program followed by Turkey (BCA 30.10/110.734.12).

In the middle of 1934, Kerim Sabit, the owner and editor-in-chief of the Cairo based newspapers El Mukaddem and El Mısiri, came to Turkey and was introduced to the Prime Minister İsmet İnönü by Abdülmelik Hamza Bey, the Ambassador of Egypt. As soon as he returned to Egypt, Sabit wrote a positive article about Turkey titled "*How I Saw İsmet Pasha in New Turkey*" on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1934 (BCA 30.10/85227M,84.556.13). In this article, how the new Turkey was established during and after the National Struggle was pointed out. İsmet İnönü was introduced from the National Struggle times with the following praises "*İsmet Pasha is not only the right hand and adviser of Ghazi but also the one Ghazi trusts most in terms of the government and reforms he had established and would establish in Turkey*" (BCA 30.10/84.554.4).

Also, the El Belağ Newspaper from the Egyptian press gave wide coverage to the conference in Delhi given by Halide Edip about Turkey and eastern-western societies upon the invitation of Elcamiatül İslamiye (Academy of Islamic Sciences) (BCA 30.10/92A133,106.641.32).

The positive political developments after 1934 are seen to have been reflected on the cultural relations between the two countries. For instance, since the 10<sup>th</sup> International Mail Congress was held in Cairo, it was decided that a copy of the stamp series produced since the former congress by the member states to the General Mail Union would be presented to the King of Egypt and upon this decision, a stamp album compiled by Turkey worth 2021TL was presented to the King Fuad I of Egypt by the Cairo Ambassador (Bulut, 2000, p.555).

A banquet was held in the mansion of Hoda Şaravi, the Head of Egypt Women Union, in honor of Corbett Ashby and Malaterra Sellier, who would attend the Conference of International Women Union in Istanbul in April 1935. During the reception, also hosting the prominent politicians of Egypt, Makram Obeyt, Vice-President of the Wafd Party and Chairman of Egypt Law Society, revealed how Egyptian women were influenced by Turkish women with the following words "...*If women hadn't been liberated in Turkey, they wouldn't have been liberated here either. We are really fond of the reforms approved by Atatürk and will try to apply them here as well*" (Cum.Arş.,K:1/115,Fh:4). Moreover, on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1936 Hoda Şaravi, the Head of Egypt Women Union, sent Atatürk a sample of a new fruit species she had grown and even wanted to name this fruit after him, but she was told that this wouldn't be appropriate (Cum.Arş.,K:1/130, Fh:100).

The visit of ninety Egyptian university students accompanied by four professors to Istanbul in July 1936 is another indication of formation of the sincere friendship relations between Turkey and Egypt. Hosted by İstanbul University, the Egyptian group left a wreath to the sea while crossing the Dardanelles in honour of the Turkish martyrs in "1915 Battle of Dardanelles". A ceremony was also held on the ship for the Turkish delegation and two Egyptian professors gave speeches praising the valour of Atatürk and the Turkish soldiers in the battle saying "Long Live Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Long Live Free and Sovereign Turkey" (BCA 30.10/200.367.10).

On 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July 1938, another group of 30 composed of students and instructors of Egypt Pedagogy Institute came to Turkey and conducted studies in Ankara and İstanbul to follow the developments in the new Turkey closely (BCA 30.10/239/86,200.369.5). Again in 1938, a delegation from the Egyptian Army visited Turkey. At the end of the visit, expressed their gratitude to the Turkish Government for the genuine interest in the delegation (BCA 30.10/286.804.19).

#### 4. Conclusion

Egypt stayed under the Ottoman rule for three and a half centuries between 1517 and 1914, during which solid socio-cultural, economic and religious ties were established between



Turksa and Egyptians. In 1919, both countries started their national independence struggles. While Egyptians were struggling against the English and the Hidiv pursuing English-sided policy, Turkish nation had to fight against both the imperialist powers headed by the English and the Ottoman government cooperating with these powers. This similarity brought the people of the two nations closer. From the early days of the Turkish Independence War, these people formed genuine relations upon mutualisation. However, the relations could only last until the Lausanne Agreement signed on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1924 because, as stated above in this article, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> terms of the agreement broke the ties between the two countries and it remained so until 1925.

Again as mentioned before, between 1925 and 1926 diplomatic relations started between the two countries upon Egypt's request. Despite this positive development, the political relations between the two countries were at the desired level, which lasted until 1934, during which one of the most crucial factors preventing genuine and sincere relations between Turkey and Egypt was in fact the regime difference because the Reform Movement in Turkey, especially abolishment of caliphate on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1924, was criticized harshly among the Egyptian society due to the concerns that it would cause disintegration in the Islam world. Moreover, the Egyptian government was concerned about the fact that the reforms in Turkey would be adopted by the Egyptian nationalists in Egypt. Therefore, the Egyptian government let those in the list of 150 personae non gratae of Turkey who were opposed to the reforms such as Hafız İsmail, the owner of the newspaper "Müsavat Gazetesi" and Shaykh al-islam Mustafa Sabri Efendi come to Egypt and bring out publications against the Turkish Republic. Because the Egyptian government allowed activities against the Republic, Turkey considered the attitude of Egypt as a threat while the Egyptian government was scared of the spread of a similar reform movement to Egypt. Although diplomatic relations didn't cease, lack of mutual trust prevented the relations from flourishing and even sometimes tension was experienced despite the long-established historical and cultural ties between the two countries.

After 1934, the fact that Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany started to follow a fascist policy and especially that Italy started to expand its influence area were the main factors converging the two nations closer. Grasping the drastic changes in the political conjuncture, Atatürk and King Fuad ceased the disagreements between them with an instant decision. After Egypt acquired its total independence status in 1936, Turkey gave full support to its request to enter the League of Nations, which was an important step in the improvements in the relations. On 7th April 1937, Turkey-Egypt Friendship Agreement, which for the first time aimed to raise the relations between the two nations to sincere friendship level, was signed.



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