

## 4 CHAPTER

# India and Turkey Relations

*After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:*

- Basic Background
- Commercial diplomacy
- Defence diplomacy
- Visit of Indian PM, 2015
- Visit of Recep Tayyip Erdogan to India, 2017

### BASIC BACKGROUND

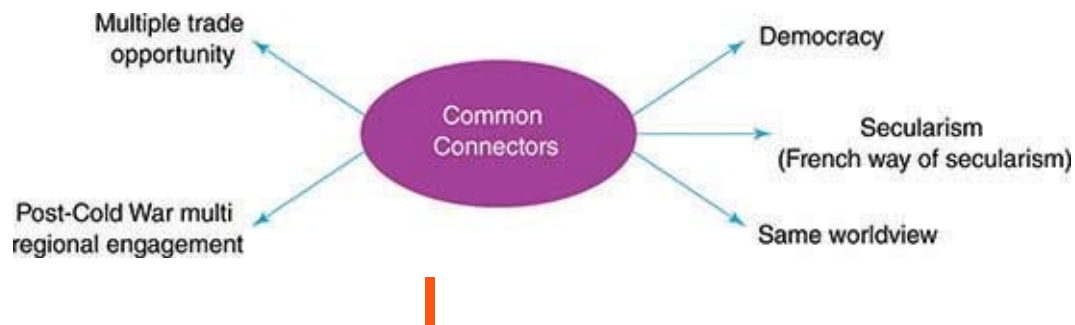
The relations between India and Turkey go back to the onset of the Medieval era. The relations gained more importance in the modern times, as we shall see ahead. India and Turkey are both modern republics, which creates a suitable base for their friendship. Turkey and India shared some of the same foundations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including certain commonalities dating back to the Ottoman period. In 1912, when the Balkan wars broke out, in order to provide medical assistance, Dr. M. A. Ansari led a medical mission. Similarly, during the issue of Turkish independence, India supported the Turks.



### Turkey and Tipu Sultan's Diplomacy

When the British started establishing their presence in India, Tipu Sultan was concerned about British advances in India. Tipu Sultan perceived British advancement as a threat to the entire Islamic faith. He began to seek Turkish cooperation to stop the British menace. He concluded a treaty with Sultan Abdul Hameed of Turkey. As per the treaty, Sultan was to assist Tipu in defence production by sending technicians to India. There was also a diplomatic exchange and Tipu sent an ambassador to Constantinople in 1784. But as Turkey was preoccupied fighting the Russians, who were eyeing the territory of the Ottoman empire, it could not forcefully participate in Tipu's struggle against the British. However, this case does inform us about diplomatic relations existing since Tipu.

The relations between India and Turkey finally opened up after Indian independence. India established diplomatic relations with Turkey in 1948. But unfortunately, due to differing ideologies, the Cold War ripped the budding relations asunder. Turkey became an ally of the US and a member of the US-led alliances, even as India advocated non-alignment. The relations during the Cold War period remained cool and picked up only when the it ended. In 2008, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited India while in 2010, Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited India. The Indian PM also recently visited Turkey for the G–20 Summit in 2015.

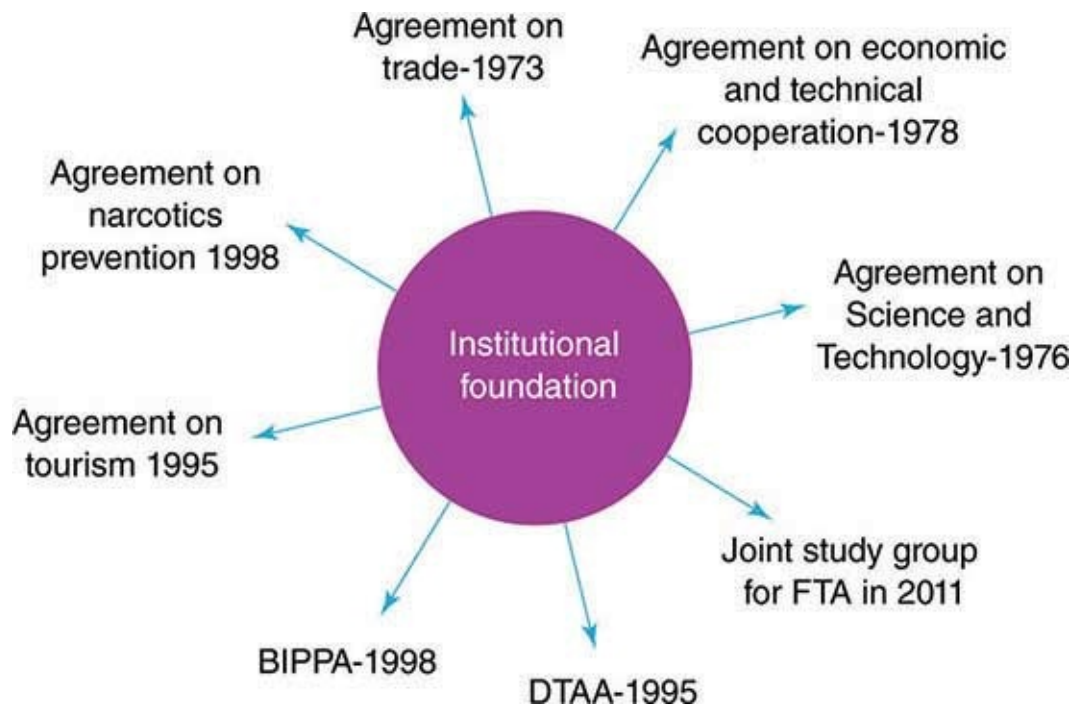


## Turkey and the Kashmir Question

One of the irritants in the Indo–Turkish relations is the Kashmir question. As we saw above, Turkey became an ally of the US during the Cold War. Not only did this alliance cement Turkey’s relations with the US, but also with Pakistan as Pakistan, during the Cold War, was also a US ally. After India became independent in 1947, Pakistan declared a war with India in 1948 over Kashmir. As Kashmir was ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh, he initially wanted to maintain autonomy. However, Pakistani forces and tribesmen began to seize the area. This led to Hari Singh concluding an Instrument of Accession with India. India, in order to compel Pakistan to stop hostilities in Kashmir, took the matter to the UN. The UN maintained the argument of peace. India spoke at the UN level of a plebiscite in Kashmir at a later stage when peace prevails in the valley and Pakistan withdraws its army from the occupied region. During the crisis, Pakistan and Turkey struck for a plebiscite. Turkey supported Pakistan and favored a UN resolution in Kashmir. Turkey’s behaviour at the time was a reflection of Cold War politics. In the 1972 Shimla Agreement, both India and Pakistan decided for a bilateral negotiation with respect to Kashmir. Only in the recent times did we see that Turkey does not pitch the rhetoric of Kashmir anymore either bilaterally or internationally. Turkey has now become supportive of dialogue.

## COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

The relations during the Cold War were weak but an institutional foundation for trade was laid down even during that time.



The 1970s and 1980s saw gradual institutionalization of structures. In 1983, a Joint Commission on Economy and Technology was created as a follow up to the 1978 agreement. In recent times, regular interactions of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey have been going on. Today, more than 170 Indian firms are based in Turkey, ranging from GMR in infrastructure to Reliance to Dabur. A Turkish firm called Fernas is laying down a pipeline in Gujarat. India exports cotton, yarn, organic dyes and imports automobile components, marble, textile machines and carpets. The SBI also has a representative office in Istanbul. Turkish investment in India is seen in construction and textile industry.

## India–Turkey Education Relations

Education relations with Turkey have been well established since 1995. India has been deputing a Professor in Indology department in Anhara University for Hindi Language training and teaching. Turkey also sends academicians in Jamia Milia Islamia and JNU in India. India provides support to Turkey under ITEC scholarships. Turkey has expressed interest in exploring relationship in auditor training with India. India has started providing Turkish auditors training at the Centre for Information Systems and Audit in India.

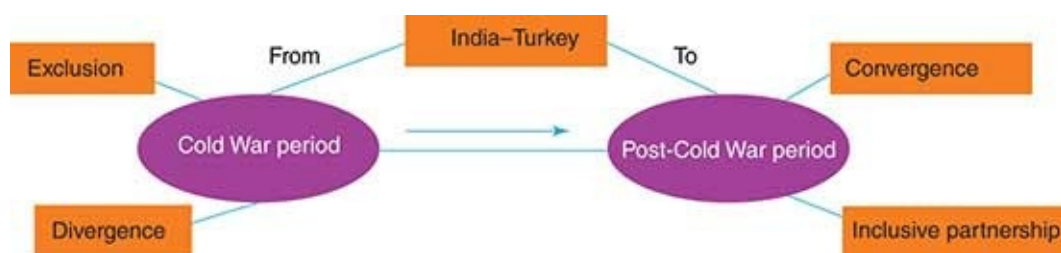
## DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

The origin of Indo Turkish defence relations go back to the Cold War. In 1986, the Turkish Prime Minister, Turgut Ozal, had visited India. He advanced a defence cooperation with India at the diplomatic level. An immediate decision was taken to have a defence attaché in the diplomatic missions. In 2002, the AKP government came to power in Turkey. The AKP government decided to enhance bilateral defence ties. In 2003, during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee to Turkey, the decision was taken to establish contacts between defence ministries. It was in 2008, during Erdogan's visit to India, that a defence cooperation agreement was concluded. Today, apart from high level defence exchanges,

naval and air interactions and exercises have become frequent.

## VISIT OF INDIAN PM—2015

The Indian PM visited Turkey in 2015 to take part in the G–20 Summit. The PM met his Turkish counterpart and garnered his support for the Make in India mission. Both sides also agreed to cooperate to strengthen defence ties. As it was a summit level meet and not a state visit of the PM to Turkey, only a state visit later will showcase the new depth and way forward in the relations. India and Turkey have improved their relations vastly since the end of the Cold War, and considerable credit for the same goes to Ahmet Davutoğlu, the former Prime Minister of Turkey. He has been credited with giving Turkey a pragmatic and vision-oriented foreign policy in recent times. Thus, the diagram below aptly sums our discussion on Turkey.



## VISIT OF RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN TO INDIA—2017

India and Turkey have historical ties with each other. The two most important connecting factors between India and Turkey are language and culture. The Sufi tradition in India is linked to the Turkish poet, Rumi. Erdogan visited India to strengthen the cultural, economic and political relationship between the two. The Indo–Turkey bilateral trade today is at 6.4 billion USD. The two sides have decided to take it to 10 billion USD by 2020. In order to promote trade, the India–Turkey Joint Economic Committee will hold regular meetings. The Turkish President participated in a Business Forum along the lines of his state visit, and both sides have identified IT, Pharmacy, health and tourism sectors to boost cooperation.



## Warming up a cold Turkey

The core areas of cooperation are economy, trade and technology. Turkey has decided to allow Indian firms in IT and the field of energy to explore Turkish markets. Despite rising economic and cultural depth in the bilateral ties, the two sides may not be able to develop a strategic compact in their relations because Turkey still maintains a special soft corner for Pakistan due to an Islamist agenda they share. This

is clearly visible in the fact that Erdogan called India to launch a multilateral dialogue to resolve the Kashmir crisis. Turkey asserts that India and Pakistan both have an equal right to be a part of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). By asserting this, Turkey joins China's alignment as the same is advocated by China. This policy of Turkey is not particularly helpful for India.

A lot of Indian diplomats have asserted that the Turkish call for a multilateral dialogue on Kashmir is highly uncalled for, as Turkey has not resolved the same concerns in its own backyard. India diplomats argue that 40 years ago, Turkey's invasion of Cyprus has stirred up trouble there, which it is still unable to mitigate due to Kurdish secessionists. Turkey remains one of the three diplomatic challenges for India after Pakistan and China. Turkey has been overtly tilted towards Pakistan irrespective of the leadership in Turkey. Rajiv Gandhi and Vajpayee tried taking steps to end the stalemate, but did not succeed in their endeavours. Present Indian PM Narendra Modi has tried to warm up a cold Turkey because he knows that diplomacy is all about making adversaries into neutrals and neutrals into friends. Modi understands that an application of adroit diplomacy will push the interests of Turkey to synchronise with India. Turkey is looking for partners outside the Middle East to strengthen its economy and Modi knows that India will prove a key player for Turkey in this regard. Thus, India knows that if it is able to bring about a mutual benefit-based partnership with Turkey, it will finally be able to synchronise Indo-Turkish interests and in the long run, help Turkey evolve its position with regard to its alliance to India.