



**Review on Turkish – British Relations in Various Fields  
(January – May 2022)**

**Batuhan ULUKÜTÜK<sup>1</sup>**

The Turkish-British diplomatic relationship, which was established after the British Empire appointed William Harborne as ambassador to the Bab-ı Ali in 1583, developed day by day and ensured that the ties between the two countries remained firmly connected throughout history. As a result of the said cooperation, it is seen that the representations of both countries in each other's territory conduct activities in various fields. This study presents the diplomatic activities in Turkish - British relations between January - May 2022, taking the Turkish Embassy in London in the centre, and the activities of the Turkish authorities in the United Kingdom, with reference to mainly Turkey's official embassy statements.

**January**

In the first ten days of January 2022, Turkey's Ambassador to London, His Excellency Ümit Yalçın congratulated Associate Professor Eylem Levelt, who is a lecturer in the field of medicine at Leeds University and carries out studies in the field of cardiac health during pregnancy on getting an award<sup>2</sup>, and Southbank Centre manager, Bengi Ünsal, on being appointed director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts.<sup>3</sup> The concrete results of the solidarity of the Turkish-British relations can be understood from the precedents of these two developments in the field of medicine, in the scientific field and in the prestigious art circles.

On January 14, 2022, President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson. According to the official statement of the Turkish Presidency, during the meeting, steps that will strengthen cooperation between Turkey and the United Kingdom, especially in the defence industry and trade, were discussed.

**February**

On February 1, 2022, Ambassador Yalçın visited the newly appointed UK Minister for Europe, Chris Heaton-Harris, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In line with this meeting and the steps taken, it can be said that Turkey is prone to an active observer attitude in the relations of the United Kingdom with different political and geographical regions and unions, by also dealing with the parts of the European side of the United Kingdom's policies.

<sup>1</sup> TED Koleji, Afyonkarahisar. E-mail: batuhanulukutuk@gmail.com. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7892-5519>

<sup>2</sup> <https://womenasone.org/escalator-awards/winner/dr-eylem-levelt/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ica.art/media/05314.pdf>



## **Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 2 June 2022**

---

Nureddin Nebati, the Minister of Treasury and Finance of the Republic of Turkey, and his delegation held two-day meetings with various international bank managers and fund investors in London on 7 – 8 February 2022. In these meetings, it was announced that the “Turkish Economy Model” was introduced. Expressing the economic models and initiatives at the meetings held by the senior officials with the participation of the representatives of both countries is proof that the bilateral relations show how close allies they are in the economic field.

At the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting that came together in Brussels on February 17, 2022, the United Kingdom Defence Minister Ben Wallace and the Republic of Turkey Defence Minister Hulusi Akar held a bilateral meeting. It is easily understood that the relations between the two countries are under the umbrella of NATO and in mutual solidarity in the field of defence.

The 4th Turkish Community Art Exhibition, organized by Yunus Emre Institute on February 22, 2022, which exhibits 70 works of 53 Turkish artists living in the United Kingdom, opened with the address of Ambassador Yalçın.<sup>4</sup> It is seen that the works in the social and artistic fields are also carried out actively.

On February 25, 2022, a phone call was held between Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar and his British counterpart, Ben Wallace, on Russia's attempts to violate Ukraine's territorial integrity, which were condemned by the official authorities of both countries. As it can be easily understood from this step, Turkey and the United Kingdom, which are in strategic positions at the two ends of the European Continent, are actively communicating with each other in regional political and military issues and trying to act in a coordinated manner.

On February 28, 2022, Ambassador Yalçın met with Priti Patel, Home Secretary of the United Kingdom, and during the meeting, the issues of counterterrorism and cooperation in security, visa issues for those subject to the Ankara Agreement were discussed. It is clearly understood that the representations and authorities between the two countries follow an active and solution-oriented policy to eliminate the grievances of citizens by going through dialogue in solidarity and harmony.

### **March**

On March 4, 2022, the foreign ministers of both countries held meetings, and it was announced that bilateral relations during the Russia-Ukraine Crisis were discussed. On the same day, a telephone conversation was held between Turkish President Recep Tayyip

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://t.co/yq4Zgox2fj>



## **Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 2 June 2022**

---

Erdoğan and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. In the official statement made by the Presidency,

At the meeting, regional developments, especially Russia's attack on Ukraine, and Turkey-United Kingdom relations were discussed. During the meeting, President Erdoğan stated that they continue to strive for an immediate ceasefire and an immediate end to Russia's attack on Ukraine. President Erdoğan reiterated Turkey's expectation of sincere support from its NATO allies in the fight against terrorism. These phrases are included.<sup>5</sup>

From this, it can be concluded that in international crises, the highest officials of both states strive to improve bilateral relations in a positive and parallel manner by working in harmony and coordination.

On March 8, 2022, Ambassador Yalçın visited the United Kingdom Minister of International Trade, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, and held talks on bilateral trade relations. According to the embassy statement, in 2021, the United Kingdom became the uppermost foreign direct investor in Turkey and third largest export market of Turkey. Here, the importance and strong level of the commercial ties in the bilateral relations stand out and it is seen that the authorities make efforts to protect and develop active commercial relations.

On March 15, 2022, Ambassador Yalçın met with Osman Okyay, Head of the Turkish - British Business Council of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), to increase the bilateral trade volume, which reached 19.3 billion USD in 2021. Once again, it is understood that the part of the studies based on economic and commercial relations during the period I have presented is of great importance and is on the agenda of the Turkish authorities.

On March 17, 2022, it was announced that Turkish Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati attended the United Kingdom - Turkey Green Finance Conference in London and conveyed the "green finance ecosystem" studies within the scope of the 2053 zero emission target. In this context, we see that bilateral relations are tried to be developed in the issues discussed by building bridges with different concepts such as environment and economy.

### **April**

On April 8, 2022, Defence Ministers Wallace and Akar held a meeting again. In the period following the Russia-Ukraine Crisis, it can be observed that bilateral relations were maintained frequently and there was a lot of exchange of views in the field of defence.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/136088/birlesik-krallik-basbakani-boris-johnson-ile-telefon-gorusmesi>



## **Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 2 June 2022**

---

On April 19, 2022, a conference called “Imagine Turkey” was held at the British Museum, and Ambassador Yalçın said that five million British tourists are expected to come to Turkey. It can be seen that it is one of the issues that it is aimed to take mutual steps in terms of tourism activities between two countries.

It is seen that on 20 April 2022, the members of British Expertise International were informed by Ambassador Yalçın about the investment opportunities in Turkey. It can be observed that there are continuous studies on the preservation of the rising momentum in Turkish-British trade relations.

### **May**

Between 11 and 13 May 2022, Turkish Air Force Commander General Hasan Küçükakyüz visited London upon the invitation of his British counterpart. It is clearly seen that solidarity in the military field has been on the agenda of both countries throughout the year.

On May 20, 2022, a phone call was held between Turkish President Erdoğan and British Prime Minister Johnson, with the words of statement of the Presidency, regarding Turkey-United Kingdom relations, as well as Sweden and Finland's request for NATO membership, and regional developments, including the Ukraine-Russia war. During the meeting, the problems caused by elements such as PKK and YPG that threaten Turkey's security were discussed.<sup>6</sup> As it is clearly seen, terrorism and security issues are tried to be resolved in parallel with solidarity and dialogue in Turkish-British relations, and high-level officials are frequently contacted.

On May 21, 2022, Turkish Defence Industry President İsmail Demir held talks with the UK Minister of State for Exports Mike Freer and stated their target to increase the share of the defence industry in commercial relations. It can be observed that each area of the economy plays a decisive role in bilateral relations.

On May 24, 2022, Turkish Minister of National Education Mahmut Özer attended the World Education Forum in London and met with Robin Walker, the British Minister for School Standards. It has been observed that the relations are also maintained in the field of education and the needs of both countries related to various issues are met.

### **Conclusion**

During this five-month period, which was discussed in the relations between Turkey and the United Kingdom, the activities of the Turkish side were emphasized and the studies

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/137986/birlesik-krallik-basbakani-boris-johnson-ile-telefon-gorusmesi>



---

## **Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 2 June 2022**

---

were examined. In the light of the data obtained as a result of all this work, it has been seen that this period was spent very productively in the diplomatic context, and the two countries acted in solidarity and cooperation on many issues from economy to defence, from tourism to trade. In this process, with the profound impact of the Russia-Ukraine Crisis, it has been understood that the two countries work in harmony in the military and international political arena, and they were highly active in these areas. It can easily be concluded that information and planning activities are conducted frequently regarding the preservation and increase of the successful bilateral commercial momentum of the previous year. Successful steps in the social and cultural fields will also contribute to the placement of pieces that will form a mosaic in the societies of both countries.