



France

Marc Reynaud

1 Afghanistan

France started its involvement in Afghanistan in 2001. The number of troops reached its maximum in 2010 when they added up to 4000 strong in a bid to solidify presence. France took part in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Enduring Freedom (US-led) operations. These interventions claimed the lives of 89 French soldiers and wounded another 700.

In 2012, all combat troops had left Afghanistan, following a decision accelerated by the new French President François Hollande. The withdrawal was completed fully in 2014. This situation put France in a very different situation compared to its allies, especially the US and the UK. This contrast was only exacerbated during the events of August 2021, during which France had much less people to evacuate and had a less disorganized evacuation. This was also helped by France's decision back in spring to evacuate 800 Afghans who had worked for them already, even though it drew some criticism accusing France of being defeatist. Still, 2 834 individuals had to be flown to France in the span of two weeks in August 2021, in what was named « Opération Apagan ».

Many think President Macron used the chaotic retreat of the western armies from Afghanistan as a way to underline his view that Europe shouldn't be so dependent on the United States, first and foremost when it comes to security.

2 Turkey - Greece relations:

In the tensions between Greece and Turkey, France has clearly sided with its EU ally - Greece. This is obvious in both its own very tense relations with Turkey and its amicable diplomatic ties with Greece. Following, what it considered to be, Turkish provocations in September 2020, when Turkey sent vessels for Gas exploration in disputed waters, Greece announced it would acquire 18 fighter jets from France. The price tag amounted to 2,5 billion euros. This order has been expanded to 24 in September 2021, emphasizing the two countries' ties. This represents the first sell of French fighter jets within the EU, and a step towards a European autonomy (security wise).

In regards to Turkey, there have been many heated events that even threatened to escalate at some points. Several times in autumn 2020, Erdogan questioned Macron's mental health and accused him of having a problem with Islam. This prompted the recall of the French ambassador in Ankara, a severe step to take with a country France is supposedly allied with. In October 2020, after a French teacher was beheaded by a man claiming to punish him for what he said about the prophet Muhammad during his history class, Macron clearly mentioned the threats he sees within some factions of Islam. A well-known French paper also published cartoons of Muhammad which were seen as very offensive in many parts of the muslim world, triggering protests and boycotts in some parts of the world. Erdogan didn't miss these opportunities to try to inflame tensions between religious communities in France. These efforts to break up French

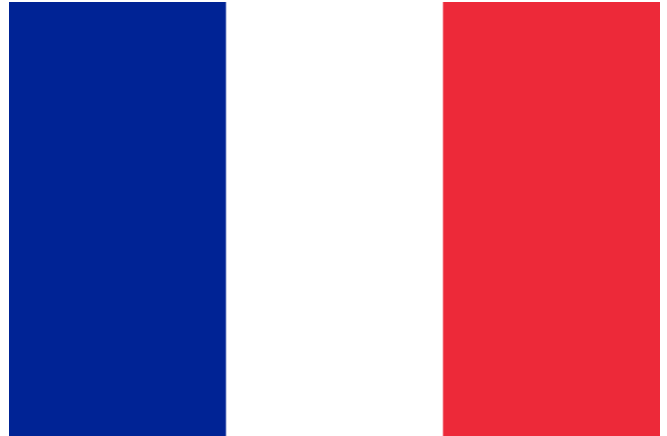


Fig. 1: France Flag

society didn't go unnoticed and Macron gave an interview to Arab Al-Jazeera to reach out to the muslim world after the uproar.