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**Polish-Turkish relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries:  
The struggle for independence and modernization**

**Abstract**

2014 marked the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Turkey. The related celebration has been perceived as a way to broaden bilateral relations between the two nations, as collaboration has not fully achieved its economic potential. The past 200 years of Polish-Turkish relations depicted in this article stand as a remarkable example of cooperation between two different cultures and traditions. Recent Polish-Turkish relations as seen in a broader European context represent the emergence of a “new beginning” of opportunity for both nations. Poland has a chance to become an intermediary nation between the EU and Turkey and to be involved in the creation of a new type of relationship between Turkey and the EU.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Poland, relations, bilateral, history of Polish-Turkish relations, the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary in establishment of diplomatic relations, international cooperation.

**JEL Classification:** N4, N44, N45, N94, N95.

**Introduction**

2014 marked the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Polish and Turkish mutual diplomatic relations. The centuries following 1414 saw decades of close relations between the nations interrupted by sporadic warfare, leading up to a new level of cooperation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One common threat throughout, uniting the interests of the Ottoman Empire and the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, was a shared concern of Russian imperialism. After the peace treaty in 1699 at Karłowice, which ended Polish-Turkish military conflicts until 1918, several Turkish-Russian Wars broke out, including World War One and the Turkish-Bolshevik War.

Krakow's cemetery contains a tomb of Turkish soldiers who fought against Russia on Polish territory in 1916-1917, on the side of the Central Powers. Likewise there are many burial sites in Turkey where Polish patriots sought refuge from Russian persecution and tried to win support for independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire. These symbols speak of a strong mutual history.

Issues connected with Polish-Turkish relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have yet to be subjected to broader analysis. In regards to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the predominant themes were Turkey's presence in the Polish struggle for independence, coupled with Poles' active engagement with Turkey in her wars with Russia<sup>1</sup>. One of the major monographs that thoroughly analyzes Poland and Turkey in the interwar period was written by D. Chmielowska. To expand the subject to the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it is essential to examine legal acts, memoirs and reports as well as archived public records. This work uses the most appropriate chronological methodology to relate the history of this unique international partnership, and goes on to consider the opportunity provided by the 2014 anniversary. It is not a comprehensive analysis, but aims to provide insight into the subject and open the field to further research.

Turkey was the only country, along with Switzerland, which did not recognize the partition of Poland. At diplomatic meetings of the Ottoman Court, the sentiment was voiced with the pithy announcement: "The Polish envoy has not arrived". The Polish National Government had its legal representatives in Turkey during the uprisings in 1830-1831 and 1863-1864. After the fall of the January Uprising of 1864 Marian Langiewicz, one of the leaders of this revolt, fled to Turkey. He found a resting place at a cemetery in Istanbul. The national poet Adam Mickiewicz who came to Istanbul with the idea of forming a Polish Legion – a military unit of the Polish Army – eventually passed away there as well. He spoke of Polish-Turkish relations simply: "In times when no other country objected to Polish repressions from hostile neighbors, the only friendly people were the Turks. We grant Turks friendship, as they have not buckled to our enemies and have not accepted the Polish partition".

Another organization with high hopes for Polish sovereignty was Hotel Lambert, led and financed by Prince Adam Czartoryski. Hotel Lambert established a diplomatic mission in Istanbul in the 1840's to support Turkey as an anti-Russian force. At the same time they aimed to reconcile with Turkey the Slavic nations of the Baltic States, where Czartoryski's movement conducted their Anti-Russian agitation [Chwalba 2001, pp. 293-294].

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<sup>1</sup> Konstanty Wolicki & Konstanty Linowski from the Polish National Government during the November Uprising and Władysław Jordan & Tadeusz Oksza Orzechowski during the January Uprising [www1].

Worthy of special note is the Polish colony of Polonezkoy established on the initiative of the Prince, which upon his death adopted the name Adampol in commemoration. This small village was not only a safe haven for Polish immigrants, but also a hub for the political activity of Polish immigration up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To this day Polish traditions are being practiced there [Dopierała 1983].

Poles not only sought refugee status at the side of the sultan, but often stood ready to fight the Russian occupants together with the sultan's army. Józef Bem (Murad Paşa), a leader of the November Uprising, worked his way to a high position in the Ottoman Army and died defending his second fatherland from nomadic Arabs [Chudzikowska 1990].

During the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Cossack division under the sultan was established and led by a legendary officer, Michał Czajkowski (Mehmed Sâdik Effendi) [Skowronek 1985]. In the following Russian-Turkish war of 1877, a Polish legion of the Ottoman Army was beaten at the battle of Kizlarem. Of yet greater importance was the Polish National Government, led by Adam Sapieha during this same war. The Turkish defeat spelled disaster for the Polish as well, removing the Polish cause for independence from the top of the international agenda until the outbreak of World War One.

Reborn Poland was the first country to recognize the modern Republic of Turkey on the international stage. Poland kept a charge d'affaires at the diplomatic mission until 1930, followed by an ambassador until 1945. As the cornerstone was laid for the new embassy building in Ankara in May 1927, Polish diplomat Jan Gawroński wrote in his memoirs: "At that time our newly finished building seemed to be the prettiest in Ankara; the white neoclassical facade with four huge columns greeted me with memories of so many Polish sites [...]. As I arrived in Ankara our main office glowed with an old-fashioned refinement, situated between the ugly though modern building of the Soviet embassy and no less ugly German garrison – type residential blocks [...]. The diplomatic missions from France, Great Britain, the United States and Italy are all packed in small leased residential houses; their managers didn't even consider building new embassy sites" [Rankowski s.a.].

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1923 the Treaty of Friendship between Poland and Turkey was signed in Lausanne: a cornerstone of mutual relations up to the present day. *Long-lasting peace and eternal friendship between the Second Polish Republic and the Republic of Turkey and citizens of both nations* was proclaimed at the outset, citing "ties of sincere friendship". The treaty stands as living proof of friendship through a long and turbulent history [Traktat Przyjaźni... 1923].

The recent 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship was honored with a series of cultural events organized by the Polish Consulate General in Istanbul,

culminating in a concert by the National Orchestra of Istanbul under the baton of Tadeusz Strugała on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 [Traktat Przyjaźni... 2013].

Following the Treaty of Friendship, the Trade and Shipping Agreement between Poland and Turkey established free trade on the territories of both countries, freedom of transit for people and goods as well as “treatment on equal footing as a nation of special privilege” [Umowa handlowa... 1923]. Interestingly, due to the Treaty of Versailles, Poland had been granted the legal right to handle the foreign affairs of the Free City of Danzig. In May 1925 and again in 1928, the Trade and Shipping Agreement was expanded to include that territory, based on the agreement between the Polish government and the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, and thus a new resolution toward Turkey went into effect [Oświadczenie Rządowe 1926; Oświadczenie Rządowe 1928]. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1931<sup>2</sup>, Poland and Turkey signed the Trade and Navigation Agreement [Konwencja Handlowa i Nawigacyjna 1931]. This agreement maintained the principle of free trade and the highest preferential status in commerce for both nations, while simultaneously introducing a wide range of exceptions. At the source of this state of affairs were the severe economic and social effects of the Great Depression.

The Settlement Convention from 1923 between Poland and Turkey granted citizens the legal right to settlement and residence, as well as freedom of employment, and “acquisition of goods and real estate, with the exception of land” [Konwencja Osiedleńcza 1928]. According to the internal regulations of both countries this Convention assured the “enjoyment of the same legal care for people and their property as natives” [Konwencja Osiedleńcza 1928]. In 1931 Poland and Turkey agreed to a new Settlement Convention, somewhat less liberal than the last as an echo of the Great Depression [Konwencja Osiedleńcza 1931]. Like the Treaty of Friendship from 1923, both agreements – the Free Trade Agreement of 1931 and the Settlement Agreement – have become acts of international law, and formed the bedrock of bilateral relations for decades. The Settlement Convention has been effective until recent times, only terminated by the Polish President upon the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004<sup>3</sup>. Although the provisions to free trade from 1931 had been abolished in part in 1977, in consideration of the new trade agreement negotiated between the government of Turkey and the Polish People’s Republic, the aspects of the Settlement Convention regarding shipping remain in effect to today [Memorandum 1931]. The longevity and stability of the Polish-Turkish relationship remain as strong as ever, and

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<sup>2</sup> The Government Decree, Dec.7, 1928 in regards to the expansion of the Free Trade Agreement to the City of Gdansk (Danzing) between Republic of Poland and Republic of Turkey. Journal of Laws 1928. nr. 101, pos. 907.

<sup>3</sup> The legal document which terminates the Settlement Agreement [Konwencja Osiedleńcza 1931].

warrant special attention today in the midst of the remarkable rate of change, not only on the international stage and in the domestic policy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also in the consciousness of the citizens of both nations.

As we articulate the background of the formal aspects of Polish-Turkish relations in the interwar period, it must be noted that Poland and Turkey stood in starkly contrasting circumstances. Poland after 123 years of captivity had finally gained independence. Though Piłsudski did not enjoy trust from the Western countries in Europe, the western border had been drawn and defined due to the support of the Entente and the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. At the same time the Army of the Entente was moving into the Anatolian Peninsula with the aim of dividing the Ottoman Empire – thus Turkey was teetering on the brink of defeat. Poland had fought a victorious war with the Soviets (with scant support from the West), while during the War with Greece, the government in Ankara had been supported by Bolsheviks. The social fabric of both countries was similarly dissimilar: Turkey was generally an ethnically homogeneous nation while Poland had a significant number of minorities within its borders. The heterogeneity within Poland's borders during the interwar period manifested itself in the diverse perspectives of its citizens, in terms of domestic as well as foreign policy, namely on the question of nationalism.

The above differences receded into the background as time passed, while the two nations' similarities gained greater importance. Just as Mustafa Kemal Paşa (Atatürk) saved Turkey, creating a strong and independent Turkish nation and becoming a national hero, the same could be said for Piłsudski – the man who revived Poland – who gained respect and similar status in Polish history. Piłsudski put a special emphasis on restoring relations with Turkey, drawing from the geopolitical legacy of Poland. He realized that without emancipation, the Mediterranean region would not be able to fully embrace security [Chmielowska 2006].

Turkey was perceived in Piłsudski's eye as one element of a tripartite understanding, together with Poland & Romania, in opposition to the Soviet Union. The activity of the Polish diplomacy in the Turkish region was met with a certain amount of concern among the Balkan states. The foreign policies of both countries did not always see eye to eye in terms of activity and global security at the level of the League of Nations, although it is fair to recognize that the Polish diplomatic party put a greater emphasis on bilateral relations. Throughout the interwar period Warsaw was significantly more active, whereas the Turkish

Republic kept some distance, due mainly to its political and economic ties with the Soviet Union. On a different note, there is a historical point of interest associated with Polish-Turkish cooperation during the interwar period, namely the sale of concession for production of the Polish fighter aircraft PZL P.24. At

this moment there is one existing model in the Turkish Aviation Museum in Istanbul [www2].

In the tragic period of World War Two, Turkey demonstrated from the very outset the kind of neutrality toward Poland to make a way for clandestine help from Western countries. Turkey was treated as a transit country for many Poles in exile on the way to the Middle East. In a similar way the Turkish territory was used to evacuate Polish gold reserves [Matuszewski letter to PM W. Sikorski 1940; Rojek 2000]. The Polish ambassador from Turkey was one of the few diplomats among a group of representatives of a Polish government who crossed the Polish-Romanian border on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1939. Turkey was present with the Polish government in exile in France. Turkey's stance against the background of other countries during World War Two was exceptional – it stood for the continuity of the Polish State and approved the diplomatic mission of Michał Sokolnicki. In the same way Turkish ambassador Cemal Hüsnü Taray was treated as an accredited representative at the Polish government until July 1945 (although in June 1940, he did not travel with the Polish Government in exile and returned home to his native land) [Michowicz, red. 1999, p. 72]. Turkey took a positive approach to the idea of federated states of Eastern Europe held up by Sikorski, not excluding the possibility of joining them [Michowicz, red. 1999, p. 356].

Warm relations with Turkey during the second World War were to a large extent credited to ambassador Michał Sokolnicki in Ankara. He had drawn parallels between the fate of Poland and Turkey in his statement that, “as it has been at times over the course of the last two centuries, today, too, Polish and Turkish matters are interdependent in European and Russian politics” [IMPS, sygn. A.11.3/M.East]. Meanwhile in Turkish public opinion there was, according to the ambassador, “a conviction of the parallel interests and tightly-bound fates” of both nations [IMPS, sygn. A.11.E.605, k. 3]. Together those factors, namely the positive stance of the Turkish government and pro-Polish public opinion in Turkey: that was what Sokolnicki regarded as an important asset of Polish Foreign Policy. Yet it was of this asset precisely that both Western powers and the Soviets wanted to deprive Poland. Political pressures from Great Britain and the US, but in particular the Soviet Red Army invasion of the Balkans resulted in “The Turks hiding like a turtle in its shell, not showing its face” [IMPS, sygn. A.11.E.605, k. 2]. Their political affinities toward Poland and questions of Polish independence were still highly present, but they couldn't be voiced outright. Citing someone “high in the Turkish social hierarchy”, Sokolnicki wrote: “the first place in national affinities goes to Poland”, before the Hungarians, Germans and French [IMPS, sygn. A.11.E.605, k. 2]. In other words, to quote

P. Wandycz, "Turkey has sustained in a dignified way their old tradition of not acknowledging the partition of Lechistan [Poland]" [1966, p. 217].

Despite the fact that supporters of Piłsudski were removed from power in the aftermath of September 1939, Michał Sokolnicki retained his position until 1945 thanks to the positive opinion of the Foreign Minister of Turkey. The Polish ambassador likewise assumed a high position during the Second World War as he served as dean of the diplomatic corps. After the war he stayed in Turkey, where he was remained a respected figure in diplomatic circles. He lectured at the University of Ankara and in Ankara he passed away and was laid to rest<sup>4</sup>.

Turkey withdrew support for the Polish government-in-exile based in London in August 1945. The time period until 1989 in Polish-Turkish relations is distinguished by a distinct cooling of relations, resulting from the geopolitical world system of the Cold War. The foreign Policy of Turkey after World War Two had been characterized by strategic alliance with the USA in opposition to the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries of which Poland formed a part. Active membership of Turkey in NATO and their aspirations toward European cohesion did not help in developing Polish-Turkish relations.

The current Polish-Turkish collaboration, in accordance with the spirit of the 1993 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, has been implemented both in the political realm – in economic, cultural and academic life – as well as at the level of governments, parliaments, local authorities, and in the non-profit sector. The Treaty of Friendship from November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993 between the Republic of Poland and Republic of Turkey of November 3, 1993, has re-affirmed the Treaty of Friendship from 1923. It has fulfilled the Treaty's provisions and created a new foundation for development of bilateral relations. Poland and Turkey have referred to such legal documents as the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Declaration and the Paris Charter and have declared a common desire for international security, including the fight against terrorism and organized crime, measures for protection of human rights and basic principles of democracy as well as "for removing the differences dividing Europe on a developmental level, transforming the continent toward a common prosperity and cooperation" [Układ o przyjaźni i współpracy 1993].

One important element of the treaty is the declaration of support by both parties for actions leading to direct lines of contact between governmental institutions, local governments as well as citizens in all areas of life. In order to monitor the development of mutual relations, a High-Ranking Consulting Committee was brought into being in 1994.

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<sup>4</sup> The Legacy of Michał Sokolnicki is stored at the Piłsudski Institute in New York and at this moment his biography is being prepared for publication.

Regulatory provisions regarding the Friendship Agreement are outlined by a number of bilateral Polish-Turkish acts, which regulate the principles of collaboration in various areas. The aforementioned economic and trade relations are based on the following records: the Trade Agreement (dated April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1974), the Economic and Technical Cooperation Contract (dated January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1980), the Treaty pertaining to Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (dated August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1991), the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (dated November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993), the Agreement Pertaining to Tourism Cooperation (dated May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1997), as well as agreements concerning “mutual assistance in customs matters”, as well as other records of lesser importance.

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1999, on the basis of the Free Trade Agreement a new path was outlined, establishing free area between the two nations. This treaty was terminated by Poland on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003 on account of Poland’s accession to the European Union [Dokument wypowiedzenia Umowy o wolnym handlu 1999]. Along with the accession into the European Union on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, Poland became one of the parties to EU agreements concluded with Turkey: most notably the Ankara Agreement which establishes the European Free Trade Association with Turkey (Sept. 12, 1963) and the Association Council Decision (number 1/95 dated Dec. 22, 1995) with the creation of a Customs Union.

Provisions concerning Polish-Turkish Cooperation Agreement have made a promising start in collaboration, namely in the areas of science research, culture and education (October 24, 1990). These provisions came into effect on April 1995 and have been based on the mutual conviction “that collaboration and student exchange within the above-mentioned areas have a positive effect in mutual understanding” [Umowa o współpracy 1990]. Both parties have announced numerous plans aimed at developing relations, which are directed at both institutional entities and private individuals, both in media and in the culture as a whole, with a special emphasis on scholarships and visits. In the field of education, science and culture a number of key steps have been announced, including: support for academic exchange programs and collaboration between colleges and university departments, academic staff exchanges in science, as well as exchanges of teaching materials and publications [Umowa o współpracy 1990]. Special emphasis has been placed on the development of intercultural experience among young people and youth organizations. The Agreement lays out plans to create temporary government programs to facilitate collaboration and student exchanges in culture, science and education.

The specific program of the agreement was agreed to and signed in Ankara on April 7, 2003, outlining collaboration in the areas of science, culture and education for the years of 2003-2006 between the government of the Republic of



Poland and the government of the Republic of Turkey. It remains in force today under the automatic extension clause [Program realizacji umowy o współpracy 2003]. The program includes the following initiatives: scholarships for students and lecturers of Polish and Turkish philology, collaboration with regard to preservation, conservation and protection of the cultural and historical heritage of both nations, mutual field studies for Polish students of the Academy of Fine Arts and Turkish art students, and a program for digitally filing commemorative books in the Polish village of Adampol. In addition this program underscored the special role played by the Adam Mickiewicz Museum in Istanbul and its significance for developing Polish-Turkish relations. Meanwhile Poland has promised its support for the promotion of the Turkish Cultural Centre in Warsaw.

In June of 2011 Poland and Turkey finalized the “Scientific and Technological Agreement” where they announced the implementation of several joint projects. These projects included research and development projects, academic staff exchanges, sharing of scientific and technical research as well as organization of conferences and symposia. The Polish-Turkish Joint Committee for Cooperation has set the goal to create favorable conditions for mutual development and cooperation, to set clear priorities and to develop Implementation Programs [Umowa o współpracy naukowo-technicznej 2011]. Two agreements are significant for their level of mutual involvement in developing collaboration and trust between the two nations. First is an agreement pertaining to collaboration in the field of technology and the defence industry dated July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1994, which came into force on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2000. Second is the Agreement between the Government of the Polish Republic and the Government of the Turkish Republic concerning collaboration in regards to organized crime, terrorism as well as cross-border crimes. This legal document was signed in Ankara on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Of particular note in this document is a true willingness and interest from both sides for multi-faceted collaboration between Poland and Turkey. This was expressed in the Polish-Turkish Declaration of Strategic Partnership and endorsed in Warsaw on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 by the Prime Ministers of Poland and Turkey. It was the first official visit of the Turkish Head of State in Poland since 1923. “The visit of the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan highlights the traditional friendship between our nations and countries, as well as the centuries-old collaboration. [...] Each area of collaboration between Poland and Turkey is marked by such friendly relations, which could grow even stronger” – thus spoke the Prime Minister of Poland at the time, Donald Tusk [Kancelaria Premiera 2009].

A new chapter in Polish-Turkish relations was marked by two significant events: Poland’s NATO accession in (1999), and subsequently Poland’s integration with European Union. Turkey, a NATO member since 1952, actively sup-

ported Polish aspiration to enter into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. At present, Poland supports Turkey's ambitions of European Union membership. Poland's standpoint in this particular matter is that the EU should continue the process of expansion, as this favors the expansion of the European sphere of stability and consequently strengthens European security. Poland's position has manifested in a declaration of active assistance for the political and economic transformation of nations that aspire to be members of the European Union [Priotytyty Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej 2012, pp. 11-12]. Poland as the member of the Friends of Turkey in the European Parliament acts on behalf of establishing the proper conditions for Turkey's membership in the EU. That support is limited by Poland's relative strength in the EU. Nevertheless, in terms of geo-political strategy Warsaw perceives Turkey as an ally.

A few words should be said about Polish-Turkish collaboration in practice. As reported by the Polish Ministry of Economy, Turkey is the principle Polish partner among the Middle Eastern countries [Ministerstwo Gospodarki 2013]. According to the data of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the year 2013 Poland ranked 18<sup>th</sup> among Turkish partners in imports and 21<sup>st</sup> in Turkish exports. In recent years the trade exchange between Poland and Turkey indicates relatively high growth as well as surplus on the Polish side. Mutual economic turnover in 2013 equalled 5,2 bn USD and showed an increase compared with the year 2012 (4,9 bn USD). Among the most important barriers to growth that have hampered closer collaboration are the ban on cattle and pork meat imports, high tariff protection in the agriculture-food sector, inadequate enforcement of intellectual property rights, restrictions on employment of foreigners and formal difficulties connected to running an international transportation business [www3]. Turkey ranks high on the list of the largest foreign investors in Poland at 33<sup>rd</sup>. A report by the Ministry of Economy indicates potential for increasing the presence of Turkish capital in Poland. Real estate forms a primary interest. In turn the number of Polish investors in Turkey is 78 (based on the Turkish Secretary of Treasury in 2011), while the estimated value of Polish vested interest in Turkey equals approximately 184,3 bn USD [Ministerstwo Gospodarki 2013]. Both parties are aware that the potential for development in Polish-Turkish economic collaboration is significant. This potential is evidenced by frequent consultations at the government level, as well as by the numerous initiatives undertaken by the entrepreneurial class. Among the public institutions that actively participate on behalf of the development of Polish-Turkish economic collaboration is the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, which is responsible for economic promotion of Poland on the international market. The National Chamber of Commerce plays an active part in promoting

the Polish-Turkish Business Council, in operation since 2013. Prior to that time, the Polish-Turkish Chamber of Commerce had been established in 2007 as a part of a social initiative, among whose activities is the creation of Business Portal Poland-Turkey, a platform for exchanging information between entrepreneurs of both nations who are interested in trade, capital and technological cooperation [www4]. In February 2014, the Polish-Turkish Chamber of Commerce established collaboration with the Polish-Turkish Business Association, bringing together more than 350 members who run businesses in Poland. Both the organizations have pledged to jointly coordinate trade and investment missions in both countries, as well as business activity to promote bilateral collaboration between Polish and Turkish entrepreneurs [Polsko-Turecka Izba Gospodarcza 2014].

The annual Polish-Turkish Economic Forum provides a prime example for how good practices can stimulate Polish-Turkish economic collaboration across sectors. This event was co-organized by the Ministry of Economy, the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, the Polish-Turkish Chamber of Commerce and the National Chamber of Commerce. Also deserving of mention are the Polish-Turkish round table talks hosted for the second time by the Polish Institute of International Affairs, as well as the Turkish Centre for Strategic Studies, which was organized this year under the slogan “Poland-Turkey: common neighbours and common interests?” [PISM 2014]. Later that year on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 a meeting was held at the Presidential Palace, organized by the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and the National Chamber of Commerce, and dedicated to economic collaboration between Poland and Turkey [Polski Konsulat Generalny w Stambule 2014].

Many representatives of the business sector were present during this meeting. It is worth noting as well that in recent years Polish-Turkish collaboration has increased at both local and state levels. In May 2009 Krotoszyn (Wielkopolska Province) provided a prime example of such collaboration, hosting a meeting of Polish and Turkish self-government representatives as part of the Polish-Turkish Economic Forum. One outcome of this meeting was a call to establish mutual economic forums in sister cities [Gmina Kościan 2009]. Turkey is one of the few non-European nations which has been designated by Polish local governments as a nation of origin of foreign partners [cf. Fuksiewicz, Łada, Wenerski 2012; Rychły-Mierzwa 2013].

Another important agent in the development of Polish-Turkish relations is The Polish-Turkish Society, in operation since 2001, with headquarters in Gdansk and a division in Ankara [Towarzystwo Polsko-Tureckie s.a.]. Among the missions of this society are to strengthen Polish-Turkish relations and to promote Turkish society in Poland and Polish society in Turkey, in the areas of

culture, education, sports and arts, as well as “to enrich knowledge among the Polish community about history, culture, art and everyday life in Turkey” [www5]. The Polish-Turkish Society also co-organizes the annual literature and art contest titled *The Wonderful Turkish World* as well as other artistic events. The Polish Friendship and Culture Association in Alanya plays a similar role in Turkey [Polskie Stowarzyszenie Przyjaźni i Kultury w Alanyi s.a.]. In order to promote Turkish culture in Poland the Turkish Cultural Centre has been established in Warsaw as a branch of the Yunus Emre Institute. Meanwhile in Istanbul, Polish culture is disseminated by the Adam Mickiewicz Museum. The Warsaw-based Adam Mickiewicz Institute is of vital importance, helping to implement the cultural program commemorating the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first diplomatic relations between Poland and Turkey. Both countries have plans to organize numerous cultural and educational events for the occasion, to be coordinated by a special inter-governmental panel [Zarządzenie nr 8 Prezesa Rady Ministrów 2013].

Already in 2012 the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage announced a separate program with a 4.5 mn zloty budget, Turkey 2014 Promesa, to prepare for this jubilee. The principle strategic goal of this program was to “increase interest of Polish culture in Turkey and raise awareness of Turkish citizens about Poland, by presenting the most valuable Polish artistic and cultural achievements, bringing together the artistic community through mutual understanding of both countries” [Program Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego s.a.]. This program was to be realized during the ceremonies of the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary, promoting Polish and Turkish mutual diplomatic relations including Polish cultural organizations and NGO’s in partnership with Turkish business. Among the projects funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage are the “Polish-Turkish literature sessions” organized by the Book Institute of Poland, concerts by the Polish National Choir at the festival in Istanbul, and the film project “Cultural film dialogue of Poland & Turkey”, produced by the Rotunda Association of Krakow.

To help with additional cultural promotion a digital platform has been created to celebrate the anniversary – [www.turkiye.culture.pl](http://www.turkiye.culture.pl) – available in Polish, Turkish and English. The anniversary has become an opportunity to honor citizens of Turkey who have made a worthy contribution to building cultural and academic collaboration between the two nations [Konsulat Generalny RP w Stambule 2014].

The 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Polish and Turkish mutual diplomatic relations was not only rich in cultural events, but also in high-profile meetings of senior government officials. On March 21<sup>st</sup> 2013 the Foreign Ministers of both countries – Radosław Sikorski and Ahmet Davutoğlu signed the Letter of Intent con-

cerning the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Turkey. Bilateral discussions were held in regards to current Polish-Turkish bilateral relations, international security and issues related to EU expansion [Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych 2013]. In March of 2014 the President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, made an official two day trip to Ankara, during which he, together with President Abdullah Gül, took part in the opening ceremony of an exhibition of Polish-Turkish historical relations and mutual cultural influences at Sakip Sabanci Museum. In the presence of both Heads of State a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the National Academy for Public Administration, the Ministry of EU Integration in Turkey and the Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East. A collaborative protocol was also approved by the Polish Public Television Network (TVP) and the Public Television channel of Turkey, as well as by Polish Radio and Turkish Radio [Kancelaria Prezydenta RP 2014]. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014, the Polish Parliament launched the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Turkey. This resolution stated that current Polish-Turkish relations are based on a solid foundation, and expressed hope that the coming jubilee would bring both Polish and Turkish diplomatic relations still closer together [Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2014].

Analytical reports express a general belief of unexploited potential in the area of Polish and Turkish relations, especially in regards to economics. They put forward a variety of proposals.

First, in terms of Turkey joining the EU, Poland should reflect on its own difficult path to the EU and share that experience with Turkey, providing more active support in negotiations with the EU [Burkert 2013, p. 63]. The centuries-old tradition of cooperation on one hand, and dynamic development and the strategic location of both countries on the other (Poland in the centre of Europe and Turkey on the edge of the European continent), combine to make Poland an obvious spokesperson for closer relations between UE and Turkey. According to a report titled: *Poland-Turkey-Europe. Polish strategy regarding Turkey – what priorities?* prepared by ThinkTank Centre for Dialogue and Analysis: “Europe stands to lose much in the long run as the Turkish away from them. Poland might play out an important role in formulating an optimal concept for European-Turkish relations and create new value in relation of their own relations with Turkey” [Bonikowska, Rabiej 2012, p. 7]. Second, according to the authors of the report, Turkey could present a great opportunity for the Polish economy as a perspective market. To that end the authors of the report recommend greater information and promotion measures in six branches of the economy: trade in food products, innovation strategy, development of large-scale business projects in

energy and green technology, supply of new technology and equipment for Turkish industry, access to Polish consulting firms for bidding in Technical Assistance projects, which would be supported through pre-accession funds, and lastly through the development of tourism industry – a significant issue, including the ability for Turkish companies to invest in the Polish hotel industry. For this to happen, the authors continue, it is imperative to boost activity in public sector, local governments as well as the private business sector, including the Chamber of Commerce, which is dedicated to strengthening contact between business entities in both countries [Bonikowska, Rabiej 2012, p. 9-11].

Poland sees Turkey as a prospective transit country for natural gas to the European Union and as an important partner for energy security. Given that Poland and Turkey both aim to develop their national defence sectors, they might also consider closer collaboration in the arms industry, on such projects as missile defence or aerospace programs [Elman 2013, p. 2].

The recent 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary could thus provide the opportunity for a “new beginning” in the context of Polish and Turkish diplomatic relations. Historical experience, common interests and friendship provide fertile ground for mutually beneficial development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Especially in an era of increasing Russian imperialism and the direct threat it poses, this cooperation could generate unique and valuable benefits for both countries.

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