

HISTORICAL STEPS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

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Abstract: *Once with the declaration of its independency in 1991, Republic of Moldova has began the path of cardinal transformations in all of the aspects of the political, economic and social life. These transformations refer to the internal as well as the external activity. As soon as obtaining independence and sovereignty, the young state entity had to begin constructing its political and diplomatic relations with its neighbors. Among the most important political partners was the Republic of Turkey. Following the development and diversification of the relations and collaboration of the Republic of Moldova and Republic of Turkey during the last two decades, we can characterize them as dynamic and ascendant. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that the process as well had bypassed different stages on its path determined by the circumstances and internal as well as the external mediums.*

The study and analysis of these is a necessity, as it gives the possibility to know the primary points of tangency, economic and political interests that bring us close and separate us at the same time. The relevancy of this topic, therefore, determines the factor of share of Republic of Moldova in the regional and European politics, its role in the internal and external commerce of the Republic of Moldova, its contribution to the conduct of the investment programmers and granting financial and logistic assistance in the development of national economy. Among the priorities of the bilateral relations, it is important to mention the dynamics of the political dialog of the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey, promotion of the national economic interests on the Turkish market, defense of the Moldovan citizens temporarily visiting the Republic of Turkey, the deepening of the bilateral relations in the spheres of science, education, culture and mass-media. It is important to mention that, unlike other states, the Republic of Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the Republic of Moldova on the 16th December 1991.

Keywords: *Bilateral relations, evolution, historical steps, social policies, economic policies, cooperation, embassy, ambassador, ministry*

The spectacular collapse of the Soviet Union and the geopolitical resizing that occurred on the European Continent in the late twentieth century had one defining effect it was mainly the occurrence and blossom of a whole range of new

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and independent states, which included the Republic of Moldova. This strongly stimulated the evolution of international relationships not only in Europe, but worldwide as well.

With the proclamation of sovereignty and independence in 1991, the Republic of Moldova obtained the status of subject of international relations – equal with other worldwide states. Therefore, the young state faced a strong necessity to follow certain steps, as to elaborate a number of cardinal reforms in all fields of political, economic and social affairs. Subsequently, along with internal reforms, a number changes had to be done for an effective foreign policy formulation.

As soon as the Republic of Moldova gained its sovereignty and independence, one of its immediate actions was the highlight of its foreign policy priorities; the outline of main directions in this field and to commence the establishment, and building relationships with its close and far away neighbors, as well as with the international structures.

Among the first countries that recognized the independence and sovereignty on the Republic of Moldova was the Republic of Turkey, which confirmed it by establishing diplomatic relations.

Following the development and diversification of cooperation relations established between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey, we observe evident inclinations toward continuous increase. It is important to underline that the very history of bilateral relations underwent various steps that were determined by many factors and various circumstances of both internal and external order. In this context, it is necessary to conduct a study that would reflect the conditions, circumstances and the process of development of the bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey.

Presently, the importance of the current study is determined by the increase of ties between the two states, in the context of regional and European policy, the considerable role of the Republic of Turkey in the internal and the external trade of our country, the contribution of this state in the development of investment programs and provision of financial assistance, as well as logistics in the economical development of the Moldovan nation.

Up till this day, there is a lack of theoretical research and synthesis of the Moldovan-Turkish relations. In terms of Globalization, it is noteworthy to outline the importance of conducting a bilateral relations analysis from the theoretical point of view, as well as to emphasize the intergovernmental cooperation in the political, economic and cultural aspects in terms of practice.

Throughout those two decades that have passed since the signing of the documents, referring to the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey, various documents from the history of bilateral relations reports of these two states have been analyzed and studied by different researchers. An important contribution to research, from the legal point of view, with reference the beginning and development of Moldovan – Turkish relations, was made by the international law experts, especially by A. Burian, who analyzed the aspects of diplomatic issues and consular law.

The Moldovan – Turkish economic trade relations problems, from the first half of the 1990, were reflected in the monograph of I. Ceres “International

economic relations of the Republic of Moldova (1991 – 1995)”, which was published in 1998. Various aspects of political, diplomatic, social and cultural works were addressed in Valeriu Mosneaga’s publications “The Moldovan – Turkish relations in context of modern development” and Eduard Baidaus in “Moldova and Turkey – realities of collaborations”, etc.

Along with the mentioned publications it is necessary to highlight the articles of Turkish journalists that appeared in the following newspapers: “Turkish Daily News”, “New Anatolian”, “Milliyet”, etc., as well as the articles and interviews of state officials of the Republic of Moldova in the researched study published in the Turkish press. Among them, we would mention the articles by Mr. Vasile Tarlev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova (2001-2008) in the “Turkish Daily News” newspaper, dated June 18th 2003; Mr. Andrei Stratan Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of Moldova (2004-2009) in the “Black Sea Trend Review” newspaper in 2005; Mr. Victor Tvircun, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Moldova (2001-2005) in Turkish dailies: “Turkish Daily News”, “New Anatolian” and “Milliyet”, which reflected the general features of multilateral reports between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey performed in 10 – 15 years from the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Among the historic material, with reference to the topic of research, we should include a number of articles written by international analysts, especially those related to the research and analysis of the Republic of Turkey’s Foreign Policy, which were addressed in the context of current research topic, by Prof. H. Bagci in “Zeitgeist” published in 2008, Prof. A. Davutoglu in “Turkish Foreign Policy Vision” and W. Hale in “Turkish Foreign Policy”, N. G. Kiriev in “The History of Turkey in the Twentieth Century” published in 2007.

Regretfully, the mentioned works do not allow us to find answers to several questions related to the first historic steps of the Moldovan – Turkish bilateral relations development and cannot allow us to present an overview of their relations from the 1990s of the past century.

The case study of Moldovan – Turkish bilateral relations’ development begins with the recognition of the independence of the Republic of Moldova by the Republic of Turkey on December 16th 1991. Consequently, this action resulted in the establishment of official diplomatic relations on February 3rd 1992¹ by an exchange of letters. As a result, Turkey’s General Consulate Office was opened in Chisinau. The first General Consul appointed to the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of Turkey was Ender Arat. The inauguration of the General Consul’s Office in the capital gave a significant stimulus and essentially improved the further development of the bilateral relations.

Examining Republic of Turkey’s attitude toward the diversity of multidimensional cooperation with the Republic of Moldova, we can certainly emphasize that they were characterized as primordial from the beginning, the cooperation principals being based on the principals of mutual respect and understanding. As mentioned by the General Consul, Ender Arat, in his first

¹. Monitorul Oficial 03.02.1992

public statement, after his arrival to Chisinau "... The Republic of Turkey has a strong interest to see its neighbor, the Republic of Moldova, as a factor of stability and peace in the region. We wish the Republic of Moldova, as a young independent and sovereign state, to develop in a democratic way, to create an attractive business environment for foreign investment, including the Republic of Turkey, to maintain its territorial integrity and to pass as quick as possible the transition period without losses..."²

In the same year of 1992, the first meetings of official level took place between the leaders of both countries. On June 25th, at Istanbul, from behalf the Republic of Turkey, President Turgut Ozal's initiative, was held a summit of Heads of States bordering the Black Sea, where the Declaration of establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) was signed. Mr. Snegur, the first President of the Republic of Moldova, attended this regional forum, and had a private meeting with the Turkish President, during which various aspects of political, economic and social – cultural issues were discussed.

The initiative of the Republic of Turkey was based not only on the improvement of the Black Sea countries' cooperation in the economic sphere, but also on the establishment of a permanent committee to coordinate legislative actions of these states. The initiative was unanimously accepted, followed by the signature of the Declaration regarding the establishment of Parliamentary Assemblée of BSEC at Istanbul, on February 26th 1993. In a period of four years, the BSEC state members³ created an organizational structure, consisting of the following necessary components: intergovernmental, interparliamentary and financial interbusiness.

It is important to mention that, in 1992 the legal base of the Moldovan-Turkish cooperation's was set by the signature of the first agreement between both countries' Ministries of Education. As a result, starting from the educational academic year of 1992 – 1993, through the Ministry, the Turkish government allocated young Moldovans 75 scholarships in very prestigious institutions of higher education. In the next two years, the number of scholarships for Turkish universities, offered to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova was constantly growing, and then abruptly fell to 30 – 35, which was explained by the appearance of other more advantageous possibilities in Romania, Germany, USA, UK, etc.

At the same time, the Republic of Moldova as well as the contracting party, starting with 1993, began enrolling in its higher education institutions young Turkish students, offering both budget and contractual basis education.

Besides cooperation in the higher education sphere, in 1993, the pre-university collaboration was set up. Thanks to the Ministry Education Agreement, the Turkish educational foundation "Fatih" in agreement with the city

² http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relations-with-moldova.en.mfa (vizitat 3 aprilie 2010)

³ Declaration of BSEC's adoptions, signed by the leaders of State and Government of the 11 river Countries of the Black Sea Albania, Armenia, Azerbaidjan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Grecia, Moldova, România, Federația Rusă, Turcia și Ucraina.

administration of Ceadir – Lunga opened the first Moldovan – Turkish lyceum on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.⁴

The next meeting of the two countries' leaders took place in April 1993, when President M. Snegur, had been with a short visit to Ankara. During this trip, President M. Snegur attended a bilateral meeting with the chief of the Turkish state, Mr. Suleiman Demirel, who took over as president after the sudden death of Turgut Ozal in March. During the meeting, the president M. Snegur "... highly appreciated the initiative of the Republic of Turkey regarding the foundation of the Black Sea states Community, highlighting that to improve the relations between the two states will contribute the interparliamentary union of the Black Sea countries to which the Republic of Moldova is member".⁵ Following the conversation, the president S. Demirel, underlined that "the primary objective of Turkish foreign policy in this region is to promote understanding, cooperation, stability and prosperity".⁶

The first meetings, at high level, between the leaders of the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey, presented an opportunity to open a new chapter in bilateral relations. As a result, a legal framework was elaborated for future bilateral collaboration. In June 1993, Nicolae Tiu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova paid the first official visit to the Republic of Turkey, where he meet with his counterpart, Mr. Hikmet Cetin. At this meeting they signed the Consulting Protocol between both countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the agreement between the governments of both states regarding visa abolition for holders of diplomatic and service passports, as well as the agreement between the governments of both countries regarding cooperation in tourism.⁷

Moldovan Foreign Minister's visit to Ankara had a new impact on bilateral relations. The following effect was the Republic of Moldova Government's decision to open its diplomatic representation at Embassy level in the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, in February 1994, the General Consulate of the Republic of Turkey in Chisinau changed its status to Embassy. Moreover, in April 1994, by Presidential Decree, Mr. Ion Botnaru, was appointed the first Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova in the Republic of Turkey.

A major step in the Moldovan – Turkish political and diplomatic recently formed relations, was the first official visit paid by the President of the Republic of Turkey to the Republic of Moldova. It is worth mentioning that the visit was lengthily anticipated by diplomatic consultations and discussions on the proposed documents for signature. As a result, the first Treaty of Friendship and Collaboration was elaborated and drafted between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Moldova, along with other five agreements. During the official visit of Mr. S. Demirel June 14 1994, a multitude meetings and discussions took place

4. Currently in Republic of Moldova there are three theoretical high-schools (Chisinau, Comrat and Ciadir-Lunga) with teaching in Romanian and Turkish, under the common name of "Horizon" High School, where about 2000 students are studying.

5. Moldova Suverană, Nr.52 (18114) 7 aprilie 1993 „Lărgirea contactelor dintre Moldova și Turcia”

6. Ibidem.

7. <http://www.turcia.mfa.md/acorduri-bilaterale/>

with the Parliament and Government officials. Another important objective of the visit was to go to Comrat. The last days of the visit were of tremendous importance, as the first basic Moldovan – Turkish document “Treaty of Friendship and Collaboration between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Moldova” was signed by the heads of the states, Mr. S. Demirel and Mr. M. Snegur. This document stipulated the general principals of the bilateral relations and outlined the directions of their development. From his part, the President of the Republic of Turkey stressed that “this agreement will give the opportunity to sign other documents and to develop the cooperation between our countries in different aspects. It is regarding cooperation in technical, scientific and economical aspects in agricultural sphere; intergovernmental agreements of cultural cooperation, combating drug trafficking, terrorism, as well as intergovernmental cooperation in automobile and air transportation”.⁸ At the same time, for the first time in Moldovan diplomatic practice, in the context of signing international political documents, was pointed out a national minority as “a bridge” between two nations and states⁹ and accepting the Republic of Turkey as a guarantor state in preserving Gagauz people’s national identity in the Republic of Moldova.¹⁰

Among the many documents and agreements signed during these meeting, was the Memorandum granting a loan of 35 million dollars USA issued by the Government of the Republic of Turkey to the Republic of Moldova.

According official visit’ program, the Turkish president, Mr. S. Demirel, and the Moldovan president, Mr. M. Snegur, on June 3rd 1994, honored with their presence the opening of the Embassy of Republic of Turkey in the Republic of Moldova. At that ceremony, President M. Snegur said that “under pleasant circumstances this event coincided in time with the opening of the Embassy of The Republic of Moldova in Ankara. These actions of our governments are an example of upward development of Moldovan – Turkish relations”.¹¹

Immediately after the visit, on July 19th 1994, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Ion Botnaru, handed his credential letters to the President of the Republic of Turkey. That ceremony and private discussions have exceeded all the limits of diplomatic protocol and lasted more than an hour. During the meeting, they discussed several issues related to present and future relations between the both countries. After the visit to the presidential palace, meetings with the Prim-Minister Tansu Çiller took place, first Vice-Minister of foreign affairs O. Oymen, Vice-President of the Great National Assembly (Parliament) Kamer Genc, State Minister, A. Gül, Executive State Chief Major, O. Bir, the Ankara Military Chief Commander. Also there were meetings and discussions with the leaders of political parties, in particular with the President ANAP (Anavatan Partisi – Motherland Party), at that time former Prim-Minister Mesut Yilmaz, Chief General Secretary of DYO (Doğru Yol Partisi –

⁸. Moldova Suverană 4 iunie 1994 „*Semnarea documentului de bază*”.

⁹. Tratatate și documente internaționale semnate de către Republica Moldova... Vol.

¹⁰. <http://www.turcia.mfa.md/relatii-politice/>

¹¹. Moldova Suverană 4 iunie 1994, „*Inaugurarea Ambasadei Republicii Turcia în Republica Moldova*”.

Justice Path Party) M. Golhan and the President of DTP (Demokrat Turk Partisi – Turkish Democratic Party) Hassan Çindoruk.

Another important event in the history of bilateral relations occurred in May 1994, when the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova was visited by the President of the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) which resulted in the inauguration of its representation in Chisinau.

On June 2nd 1995, the new Turkish Ambassador, Mümin Alan, was received by the President Mircea Snegur to issue the credential letters. During the meeting, they discussed the perspectives of bilateral collaboration as well as cooperation within international structures. In this context, Ambassador had put an emphasis on the development of economic relations pledging to “encourage Turkish businessman to invest into the Moldovan economy”.¹²

Following the first official visit of the President of the Republic of Turkey in the Republic of Moldova, the bilateral relations, and mainly the economic ones have showed a good rate of growth. If in 1992 the volume of trade between two countries was almost 1 million dollars USA, then by 1996 the indexes rose up to 8 million dollars USA. Subsequently, we should point out the growth of the Turkish Companies that commenced their activity as economic agents on the territory of the Republic of Moldova .i.e., in 1997 they numbered 78 companies, including such well-known companies as “SUMMA”, “Infinity”, “Efes Pilsner”, etc.

Over the next few years, took place a series of visits of several Moldovan officials to the Republic of Turkey, as well as specialized delegations, important from both, political and economic – cultural aspects which in conclusion demonstrates a continuous development of the Moldovan – Turkish relations.

The response visit of the President of the Republic of Moldova to Ankara was organized in the period of May 22nd to 25th 1996. At the end of the formal negotiations, the heads of the states signed a joint statement¹³. Ministers, who participated in both delegations on behalf of the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey, have also signed the following six bilateral agreements:

“Consular Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey”, “Agreement on legal assistance in civil, commercial and criminal matters between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey”, “Intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in education”, “protocol on cooperation in industry field between the Ministries” and “Interdepartmental agreement on cooperation in sports and youth”.

A set of initiatives, targeting different areas of activity, has been sent through the Moldovan Embassy in the Republic of Turkey, primarily aimed to deepen the bilateral relations, where the Gagauz Autonomy should have been considered as a connection point in its cooperation with the BSEC. As a result, Mr. Lucinschi asked the president of the Republic of Turkey to receive the head of Gagauzia, Mr. Gh. Tabunscic, as representative of the Republic of Moldova, with the purpose of renewal of discussions on issuance of the 35 million dollars USA credit. The visit took place March 10-18 1997, with the support of the Moldovan Embassy in the

¹². Moldova Suverană 6 iunie 1995 „Turcia ne devine tot mai aproape”

¹³. Registrul tratatelor bilaterale al RM cu RT, 0000264, Ankara, 22.05.1996.

Republic of Turkey. The delegation was received by the Turkish President, Mr. S. Demirel, Mr. N. Erbakan, from the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Parliament, Members of Government. The high level discussions, held with the support of, and being monitored by the Embassy, ended in agreement to start the project of water supply in the southern regions of the Republic of Moldova, for which, the first tranche of loan in the amount of 5 million dollars USA was issued.

At the same time, on May 17th 1997, the Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Ion Botnaru, and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Ali Tuzgan, have exchanged the confirmation of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey, signed on June 3rd 1994 in Chisinau, as well as the Agreement on promotion and mutual protection of investments, signed on February 13th 1994 in Istanbul.

In conclusion, it should be noted that with the beginning of the construction of the independent and sovereign state, based on respect for international law and generally accepted democratic values, the Republic of Moldova during the first half of the '90, developed a clearly defined strategy of its foreign policy, relying on the principal of good neighborliness and multilateral cooperation. The above information integrally refers to the establishment and the development of the Moldovan – Turkish bilateral relations. Turkey's recognition of the Republic of Moldova's diplomatic status, gave way to the establishment of a constructive political dialogue not only at the level of heads of state, but also at ministerial and interdepartmental levels. Additionally, the number of bilateral agreements analyzed above, including the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, served as a strong legal base for the development of partnership in various fields of national economic, education, tourism and sports spheres.

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