



Poland And Turkey After 600 Years

Małgorzata BONIKOWSKA

Prof. Dr., President, Centre for International Relations, Warsaw, Poland

Summary

Old friends new partners”, this was the slogan of the 600 years’ anniversary of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Poland, celebrated in 2014. Both the countries lie at the crossroads of routes from east to west and north to south which made them a molting pot of influences and cultures. Both positioned themselves as intermediaries and connecting points but from different perspectives, given by difference of dominating religions. Kingdom of Poland, called “Noble Republic” was protecting Christian Europe from Islam, Ottoman Empire was trying to expand and take some parts of Europe. The 600 years anniversary was an excellent opportunity to recall events from a shared glorious past but did not bring the two countries much closer for the future. Pity, as it is very much needed, taking into consideration the role of the Turkish Republic in the region and of Poland in the European Union.

The article presents a short description of the common past of these two nations and tries to design their future, biased by current developments. The new partnership between two countries has to take into consideration the events in the difficult era of growing instabilities in Europe and in the Middle East but what counts the most is peoples mindset, changing under the circumstances. The article analyses what the Poles and Turks think and gives recommendations how Turkey can help Poland raise awareness and knowledge of the Islamic culture and how Poland can bring Turkey closer to Europe again.

Islam is one of the issues that makes Turkey distant from Poland and Europe, especially now, in the time of migration crisis. In the last few years, the Polish society become more conservative towards people coming from non-European countries, especially Muslims. Along the recent opinion polls, Poles like the most the European nations and much less Russians, Roma, Palestinians and Turks. In the same time, 44 percent of Poles demonstrate „cold approach” towards Islam but almost 90 percent declare they don't know personally any Muslim. Only 23 percent of the surveyed like the Muslims and 33 percent feel neutral to them.

This strange „platonic islamophobia” is based not on direct experience but on information from the media. The experts stress that negative opinions towards Muslims expressed by the Polish society are not addressed to the those who already live in Poland and that the positive opinions come mostly from educated Poles who had direct contact with Muslims during trips abroad. Simultaneously, most of the responders think the conflict between the Western civilization and the Muslim world is not inevitable. 43 percent consider there is possibility to find the common, intercultural ground for reconciliation and the opposite opinion is expressed by 34 percent of surveyed. It has to be stressed however that the pessimistic option has grown in the last few years by 15 percent, mostly because of the growing tensions in the Middle East, creation of ISIS as well as recent terrorist attacks and immigration crisis in Europe.

Research show that the public opinion in Poland is divided in diagnosing sources of tensions between world of Islam and the West. 40 percent consider it comes from fundamental differences such as values, religion and culture. Similar group (38 percent) think the conflict is caused by opposite economic interests and political fight. In the same time, 22 percent of responders doesn't have any opinion

on the issue. 64 percent see Muslims as not tolerant towards other cultures and values, 63 percent stress there is a problem with assimilation of this minority in Europe, 57 percent associate islam with violence and thinks this religion encourages it, but in the same time 50 percent agree that most of the Muslims condemn the terrorists attacks done by Muslim fundamentalists. 49 percent of Poles think the extremism is not so much led by religion as by the poverty and lack of education, 44 percent consider that the Muslim can feel offended while one presents their religion in a bad way (ie Mahomet cartoons etc), but 35 percent don't agree with such opinion.

The mindset of people may change but it is a long process. The strategic "restart" between Poland and Turkey should take into considerations past and present in all the dimensions mentioned above.

Özel

Eski arkadaşlar Yeni ortaklar “ Türkiye ve Polonya arasındaki diplomatik ilişkilerin 2014 yılında kutlanan 600 yıllık yıldönümünün sloganı oldu. İki ülke doğudan batıya ve kuzeyden güneye giden güzergahların kavşağında yer aldıklarından etkilerin ve kültürlerin eritme potası haline gelmişler. Her ikisi egemen olan dinlere göre kendilerini farklı aracı ve bağlantı noktası olarak konumlandırmışlar. ‘Asil Cumhuriyet’ olarak adlandırılan Polonya Krallığı Osmanlı İmparatorluğu genişlemeye ve Avrupa’dan arazi koparmaya çalışırken Hristiyan Avrupa’yı İslam’a karşı koruyordu. 600. yıl dönüm paylaşılmış şanlı geçmişi anmak için mükemmel bir fırsat oldu ancak iki ülkeyi gelecek için yakınlaştırmadı. Yazık oldu çünkü Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin bölgede ve Polonya’nın Avrupa Birliği’ndeki rolleri itibariyle bu yakınlaşma şu anda çok gereklidir.

Bu makalede iki milletin ortak geçmişlerinin kısa tanımı sunularak günümüzdeki gelişmelerin ışığında gelecekleri planlanmaya çalışıl-

maktadır. İki ülke arasındaki yeni ortaklık çerçevesinde Avrupa'da ve Orta Doğu'da artan istikrarsızlıkların zorlu dönemindeki olayları ve ön önemlisi duruma göre değişen halkların zihniyetinin göz önünde bulundurulması zorunludur. Makalede Polonyalıların ve Türklerin düşünceleri analiz edilmekte ve Polonya'da farkındalığın ve İslam kültürü hakkındaki bilgilerin artırılması için Türkiye'nin yapabilecekleri ve Polonya'nın Türkiye'yi Avrupa'ya yakınlaştırmak için yapabilecekleri konusunda önerilerde bulunmaktadır.

İslam, özellikle de şimdi göçmen krizi sırasında Türkiye'yi Polonya'dan ve Avrupa'dan uzaklaştıran konulardan birisidir. Son birkaç yıldan beri Polonya toplumu Avrupa harici ülkelerden gelen insanlara ve özellikle Müslümanlara karşı daha temkinli olmaya başlamıştır. Son anket çalışmalarına göre Polonyalılar en çok Avrupa halklarını seviyorlar ve Rusları, Roma vatandaşları, Filistinlileri ve Türkleri daha az seviyorlar. Aynı zamanda Polonyalıların %44'ü İslam'a karşı 'soğukluk' hissediyorlar ama %90'ı da kişisel olarak hiçbir Müslüman'ı tanımadığını beyan ediyorlar. Ankete cevap verenlerin sadece %23'ü Müslümanları seviyorlardı ve %33 nötr duyguları beslediğini belirtmiştir.

Bu tuhaf 'platonik İslamofobi' doğrudan elde edilen tecrübelerle dayanmayarak medyadan elde edilen bilgilere dayanmaktadır. Uzmanlar Polonya toplumunun Müslümanlara karşı beyan ettikleri olumsuz duyguların halihazırda Polonya'da ikamet edenlere karşı olmadığını ve olumlu duyguları beyan edenlerin çoğu eğitimli ve yurtdışına gittiklerinde Müslümanlarla doğrudan irtibat kuran Polonyalılardan ibaret olduğunu vurguluyorlar. Aynı zamanda ankete cevap verenlerin çoğu Batı medeniyeti ve İslam dünyası arasındaki çatışmanın kaçınılmaz olmadığını düşünüyorlar. Ankete katılanlar arasında %43 uzlaşma için ortak kültürler arası zeminin bulunma olasılığına olumlu bakmakta ve %34 karşıt görüşe sahiptir. Ancak karamsar seçeneğin özellikle Orta Doğu'da tırmanan gerginlik, DEAŞ oluşumu ve son zamanlarda artan terör saldırıları ve Avrupa'daki göçmen krizi nedeniyle yüzde 15 arttığının vurgulanması gerekmektedir.

Araştırmalar Polonya'daki kamuoyunun İslam dünyası ve Batı arasındaki gerilim kaynaklarının teşhis edilmesi konusunda bölünmüş olduğunu göstermektedir. %40'ına göre gerilim değerler, din ve kültür gibi temel farklılıklardan kaynaklandığını düşünüyorlar. Buna benzer bir yüzde (%38) ise çatışmanın karşıt ekonomik menfaatleri ve siyasi kavgalardan kaynaklandığını öne sürmektedir. Aynı zamanda ankete cevap verenlerin yüzde 22'si konuda fikir sahibi

değildir. Ankete katılanların yüzde 64'ü Müslümanları diğer kültür ve değerlere karşı hoşgörüsüz olduğunu düşünüyor, yüzde 63'ü bu azınlığın Avrupa'da asimile olması konusunda sorun olduğunu düşünüyor, yüzde 57'si İslam'ı şiddetle ilişkilendiriyor ve bu dinin şiddeti teşvik ettiğini düşünüyor ama aynı zamanda yüzde 50'si Müslümanların çoğunun Müslüman köktendincileri tarafından yapılan terör saldırıları kınadıkları konusunda mutabık olduklarını beyan etmişler. Polonyalıların yüzde 49'u aşırılığın dinden ziyade yoksulluk ve eğitim eksikliğinden kaynaklandığını düşünüyor, yüzde 44'ü dinin olumsuz şekilde sunulduğunda (örneğin Peygamber karikatürleri, vs.) Müslümanların rencide olduklarını ancak yüzde 35'i bu konuda karşıt görüşe sahiptir.

Halkların zihniyeti değişebilir ancak bu uzun bir süreçtir. Polonya ve Türkiye arasındaki stratejik 'yeni başlangıç' yukarıda bahsedilen tüm boyutların geçmişi ve günümüzü göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır.

Introduction

In 2014, Turkey and Poland celebrated the 600th anniversary of diplomatic relations. This intensive interaction led at the end of the day to overlapping of cultures in both the countries. Such a long history of diplomatic ties happens only rarely in international relations. Despite for that, the knowledge and mutual understanding in both the countries is much less today than it was when we had a common border for centuries. Islam is one of the issues that makes Turkey distant from Poland and Europe, especially now, in the time of migration crisis.

„*Old friends new partners*”, this was the slogan of the 600 years’ anniversary. Poland, same as Turkey, lies at the crossroads of routes from east to west and north to south, and its location allows it to be an intermediary and connecting point: for centuries it has been adapting models of civilisation taken from the West and East. The anniversary was an excellent opportunity to recall events from a shared glorious past but did not bring the two countries much closer in present. The „new partnership” has to take into consideration the context of developments in the difficult era of growing instabilities in Europe and in the world. What counts the most is the peoples mindset and this is changing under influence of the circumstances. In this regards, both countries can exchange the favours: Turkey can help Poland raise awareness and knowledge of the islamic culture, Poland can bring Turkey closer to Europe again.

Common Past

The history of the Polish state goes back over a thousand years – quite a long time in European terms. In the 16th and 17th centuries the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, an organism formed by Poland and Lithuania, became the largest European state, a multi-ethnic and well-run society with a unique model of government – a gentry democracy. Its long border with Ottoman Empire resulted with wars, battles but also cross cultural exchange. Many words of Turkish origin are still used in Polish today. It was Poland who was able to reject Turkish expansion in Eastern Europe but in the same time, get to know better its powerful neighbour and its culture.

By the 18th century the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was in decline, due in part to a crisis of central authority and a failure to appreciate external threats. The neighbours – Russia, Prussia and Austria, which had all become powerful absolutist monarchies by that time – took advantage of the situation: they partitioned the territory of the Polish state and wiped Poland off the map of Europe for 123 years. For more than a century, Poles struggled to regain their independence, launching several nationwide insurrections against the partitioning powers. They fought also for other nations, as general Joseph Bem, who after the collapse of the revolution against Austrians, run away to Turkey and become mareshall in the

Sultan's Army as Murad Paşa. Showing respect for once powerfull neighbour, the Ottoman Empire never recognised the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century, something that is stressed by Poles till this day.

Similarly, Poles had a lot of respect for the Ottoman Empire and its impressive expansion since 1299 C.E. This was the first Islamic state to conquer and rule the Balkans, defeating the Serbs, Bulgars, Byzantines, and Hungarians. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, they conquered various Turkish principalities in Anatolia, most Kurds, Iraq and the Mamluks of Egypt, including overlordship over Crimea and North Africa. Except for Iran, the Ottomans dominated the Middle East for nearly four hundred years. After 1517, in addition to being sultan, the Ottoman ruler was also widely recognized as a Caliph throughout the Sunni Islamic world which made Poland in the eyes of the Europeans the true "*antermurale Christianitatis*". The concept entered the Polish psyche as one of the strong national myths especially after a battle of Vienna in 1683, when the army led by a Polish king John III Sobieski protected the capital of the Holly Roman Empire of German Nations against the Turkish army.

When Poland's independence was restored after the First World War in 1918, its territory become much smaller. In the same time, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Republic of Turkey emerged in 1923, also in a very limited territory. After a twenty-year period during which Poland consolidated its statehood and economy, the country was attacked by Hitler's Germany, and thus the Second World War started. Poland's army joined the allies, Turkey remained neutral. When the war ended in 1945, Poland and other East-Central European countries found themselves in the Soviet sphere of influence, behind the Iron Curtain, cut off from the rapidly developing West. An inefficient centrally-planned economy and reduced sovereignty prevented the Polish state from fully exploiting its development potential after the war.

During this time, Western Europe was quickly rebuilt from the ruins and started to form communities and began to work towards creating a single European market. Modernised Turkey, made as a western type of a state, applied for the membership in the EEC in the 1960. Poland could do it only 30 years later. Both the countries were transforming its administrative structures and economy following the european guidelines. In 1963 the then European Economic Community granted Turkey the status of associate member, in 1995 the country joined the Customs Union (EUCU), in 1999 it became an official candidate for membership of the EU, and in 2005 it entered into formal accession negotiations. Poland started the negotiations in 1998 and entered the EU in 2004, together with other 9 countries.

Turkey And Europe

"Turkey is becoming strategically more important for the European Union than it was in the past", Günter Verheugen, former European Commissioner for Enlargement has been saying¹. Recent developments in the region, especially wars in Ukraine and Syria, growing threat of international terrorism as well as migration crisis make Turkey and the EU closer again after some years of distance. Last visit of Angela Merkel to Ankara and the EU-Turkey summit in Brussels on 29 November 2015 opened up a new chapter in these relations. Turkey is seen today by Europe as a key partner in stabilizing its southern neighbourhood and its borders.

In 2010, Ahmet Davutoğlu, foreign minister of Turkey at the time, formulated its government strategy in the following way: *First, Turkey aims to achieve all EU membership conditions and become an influential EU member state by 2023. Second, it will continue to strive for regional integration, in the form of security and economic cooperation. Third, it will seek to play an influential role in regional conflict resolution. Fourth, it will vigorously participate in all global arenas. Fifth, it will play a determining role in international organizations and become one of the top 10 largest economies in the world. To achieve them, Turkey must make progress in all directions and in every field, take an interest in every issue related to global stability, and contribute accordingly.*²

In 2012, approximately 50 percent of Turkish society were still in favour of EU membership but, in 2004 it was almost 78 percent. At the same time, in 2012 only 17 percent of Turks believed that the accession would eventually happen.³ There may be several reasons for the growing scepticism, mainly:

- prolongation of the accession process for so many years,
- unclear declarations from the EU side about its end,
- the visa regime for Turks in the EU, nevertheless the customs union,
- the crisis in Europe (economic and political),
- strong economic performance of Turkey in the last decade,
- the achievements of Turkey's diplomacy, which has led to a strengthening of Turkey's standing in the region,
- strong political leadership of the AKP party.

Greater scepticism among Turks regarding the prospect of accession is also connected with cultural differences. Some European politicians and experts have a view that Turkey will never be a part of the Western world and will fail to adopt

1 Interview for *FAMAGUSTA GAZETTE*, Thursday, 27.10.2011.

2 A new vision, *Foreign Policy*, 20 May 2010.

3 Research carried out by TAVAK (Turkish-European Educational and Scientific Research Foundation), August 2012.

Western values. Political scientists have even started to talk about the new, unofficial “Copenhagen criterion” – religion.⁴ In the same time, European Union has declared to be neutral as far as religion is concerned distancing the institutions from the churches. It was not decided that Europe, Christian by tradition and history, will be only Christian. This approach, open to accept multiculturalism, may change in the nearest future following the polarisation of the society towards the immigrants from the third countries, especially Muslims, seen today by many Europeans as a threat to the stability and security of the Old Continent.

In the same time, educated Turks, professionals and business elites might still feel a sense of ties and interdependence with Europe. The Western influence is not only due to the last few decades of relations marked by Turkey’s striving to enter the European Communities, and subsequently the EU. It is above all several hundred years of history of contacts and mutual permeation of cultures, remembered a little in Poland, but quite a lot in the Balkans.

Turkish society does not perceive westernisation as a threat to Islam, but as an alternative to Islamic fundamentalism, which a considerable number of Turks fear. This, however, might also change with the time. The slowdown of the European economy, quarrels among the member states about Russia after annexation of Crimea and the chaos around the migration crisis, have changed the way the EU is perceived by Turks. They still believe that the “values and ideas represented by the EU, are not only precious for Europe, but they are valuable globally”⁵, but Turkey today have doubts if integrated Europe is still a serious political project in a long run.

The EU member states in favour of Turkey’s accessions (each for a different reason) are: Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, and Poland. This has not stopped German and French firms playing a significant role in the Turkish economy. Both of these countries are highly active on the Turkish market, and involvement of governments in supporting their countries’ firms helps secure business contracts. The traditional opponents are France, Germany, Austria, Cyprus and Greece. They stress that due to the large Turkish population of 76 million, the country will make concessions in the union’s institutions only to Germany. This would mean a mighty influence over Community decisions. At the same time Turkey – which still stands out from the West in terms of wealth – could become the largest recipient of funds under the cohesion policy.

The principal bone of contention in EU-Turkey relations is the Cyprus question. This has caused among other things a slowdown in accession talks and a boycott of Cyprus’ EU presidency of the council of the EU in the second half of

⁴ For more on EU-Turkish relations see: *Turcja i Europa*, edited by Adam Szymański, Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM), Warsaw, 2011.

⁵ Quote from an interview with the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey Ali Babacan during his visit to Poland in January 2012, given to the THINKTANK center.

2012. It also affects severely the EU – NATO relations, which have been at an impasse due to the double Turkish-Cypriot veto. After the EU-Turkey summit last November, it seems that this challenges can be resolved. But there are more controversies around Turkey Europe has to deal with, such as the Omanis issue of 1915, the situation of Kurds, lack of freedom of the press, violations of human rights and civil freedoms. Such difficult topics did not stop the EU from concluding the agreement with Turkey on immigrants last November: member states declared to give 3 billion EUR to the Turkish government for immigrants, to open up one chapter of negotiations and to end up a visa regime for Turks in the nearest future.

Common Future ?

For Turkey, the European Union still is and will remain an important point of reference, where economic relations and migration policy are a priority. This does not change the fact that Turkey is concerned about the economic and political situation in the Old Continent as Europe receives 45 percent of Turkish exports – made easier by customs union – and the inflow of European investments is an important factor in development. But Turkey today has other alternatives as well. Instead of looking always towards Europe, the country feels strong enough to act in the region as a strong, independent player. Russia, China and Iran are main competitors by influence. If Iran goes nuclear, Turkey will have to do so too. This would enforce Turkey's aspirations to become a superpower and would meet with a great deal of mistrust on the part of its neighbours.

Where does Turkey look? First, it stimulates development of relations between its own Turkish-speaking republics of Central Asia under the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS), of which (apart from Turkey) Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Azerbaijan are members, and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are to become members. Second, the country continues to influence the Balkans, especially the states in which a large portion of the population are Muslims, such as Bosnia, Albania, and Bulgaria. It is true that these countries acknowledge cultural and social closeness with Turkey, but are also wary of the concept of Turkey as a leading political force in the region. As Günter Verheugen put it, Turkey "must avoid behaving as a regional superpower that seeks to dominate others. It is prepared, however, to play a leadership role by setting an example, offering help, sharing best practices and giving guidance if wanted"⁶.

Neo-osmanism puts Turkey not only in the position of a strategic partner to the West, but of an independent player in the region, building a sphere for multiculturalism and civilisation, a bloc of countries under Turkish leadership

⁶ Günter Verheugen, *Meeting the Geopolitical Challenges of the Arab Spring: A Call for a joint EU-Turkish Agenda*, Turkish Policy Brief, TEPAV (International Policy and Leadership Institute), January 2012, pp. 3

which could become an alternative to EU membership. However, such concept is not warmly welcomed by the Turkish intelligentsia. They see such “dreams of power” as a threat to democratic and liberalisation processes and an obstacle to the already difficult creation of a citizens’ society in a Muslim country. Imperial urges on the part of Turkey and its leaders lead to negative connotations with the Ottoman Empire, associated with backwardness and incompetence criticised a lot by Atatürk and his followers.

From one hand, President Erdogan’s nick name “sultan” may have negative connotations for intelligentsia, but for the Turkish society as a whole it can be associated with a strong leader, with a clear Muslim profile. The paradox is that also Europe welcomes now such leadership as a warranty of stability and partnership against the growing threats around the Old Continent. Turkey’s location, at the crossroads of the East and West, its military might and strong position in North Africa and the Middle East means it is invaluable for European Union, especially in the context of the negative consequences of the Arab Spring and destabilisation of countries to the south of Europe.

Turkey’s intensive presence in Muslim countries of the region works in Europe’s favour, because it strengthens the pro-modernisation communities there. The common Turkish and European problem of energy and gas dependence upon Russia (i.e. the need to seek alternatives) and the danger that countries outside of the international system of arms control, such as Iran, will gain a nuclear weapon capacity are also important for building healthy relations. These situations have come to the notice for example of Poland, which has become involved in the transformation and democratic process in Tunisia, Libya and other countries, and actively supports the project for the pipeline from the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf to Europe via Turkey (project Nabucco).

There are therefore two paths that can be taken. Turkey can either be the ‘builder of bridges’ between the West and the East, or it could become an ‘inconvenient’ neighbour of Europe, in which case a piece of Europe will only be a part of that country in geographical terms. The year 2023 will be the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, which for the national elites is an extraordinarily important watershed. It is not only an opportunity to summarise the past achievements of the country created by Atatürk as a counterbalance to its imperial past, but above all to define the key challenges of the future and redefine development strategy. According to the government’s plans by 2023 the country is to become, among other things, the 10th economy in the world and achieve a target of USD 500 billion in foreign trade.

If Turkey joins the EU by that time or at least completes negotiations, the European Union will expand its internal market by almost 80 million people and gain a cheaper location for manufacture while retaining the same standards and norms. At the same time Europe’s border will shift to Mesopotamia and the Ca-

ucasus, with all of the social, cultural and political problems of those regions. For Turkey, EU membership would mean among other things a strengthening of the process of reform and modernisation of the country, an influence over the EU's internal policies and the situation in Europe as well as an increase in European investments and trade balance with Europe.

If the accession does not happen, which is very likely, both parties should begin to look for a way out of an uncomfortable situation or a new concept of their relations other than the EU enlargement. Simultaneously, both the players will have to rethink what they truly want to be in the new century.

The greatest achievement of contemporary Europe is the creation (after hundreds of years of war) of means of resolving disputes other than by force. The most important elements on which this process is based are renunciation of the will to dominate, focusing on what unites and not what divides, and trust – both of states and societies. European solidarity assumes the existence of a community but does not cure the misalignment of interests, which grow in the bad time. The European project was implemented under umbrella of the US as a Western superpower and the constant incapacity of EU institutions for efficient management has been a result of lack of political will on the part of the Member States to change this. Now the circumstances have changes. The US are no more interested in protecting Europe, and the EU neighbourhood is a ring of fire. The recent developments make think the European politicians are slowly change the style and approach.

Only two scenarios appear for Europe: either greater integration or the gradual disintegration of political union, Euroland and the Schengen zone, and consequently – the seeking of new forms of coexistence on the European continent while retaining the EU's second greatest achievement: the single market (economic union). In the optimistic scenario, the European Union might use the crises in the Eurozone and around migrations to speed up integration processes, to specify its character and to restructure its decision making process for more adapted to the time of wars.

Polish –Turkish relations

The 6th country in the EU and its member state since 11 years, Poland is in a completely different shape today than in 1989, when the Soviet Bloc fell apart and the country was struggling with hyperinflation (the annual rate of inflation had reached 640 per cent in 1989) and the foreign debt stood at 42.3 billion USD (65 per cent of GDP). There was a drastic shortage of goods on the market; the currency in use was the US dolar and the national economy was on the verge of total collapse. The radical changes produced a significant reduction of inflation and of the budget deficit (there was a budget surplus by the mid-1990s). The

shortage of goods on the market was remedied and the central distribution of goods was eliminated. Foreign creditors agreed to write off a portion of Poland's debt. Foreign currency reserves rose and by 1992 Poland's economy was growing again, at a higher rate than in any former Eastern Bloc country.

After 25 years of economic, political and socio-cultural transformation, Poland has become an important player in the EU. It had done extremely well in a period of global crisis. The country enjoys a stable economy and significant influence over decision-making in the European Union, having a Pole, Donald Tusk, at one of the EU top jobs. The Polish success is due to many factors, mainly the economic revolution, healthy financial system and enterprising spirit that has been the driving force behind the Polish economy over the last two decades. The Poles put faith in their own resourcefulness and took matters into their own hands with great zeal. Poland today is a land of opportunities for business with 1.8 million companies privately owned. With its still reasonable cost of highly qualified human capital as well as not too high operational costs, the country is one of the most preferable places for foreign investment and BPO services.

Poland and Turkey share a successfully carried out transformation of the state and its structures and both demonstrate ambition to play a significant role in their respective regions. While Turkey's position in the world is stronger than Poland's, it is Poland who has been a member of the EU for the past decade and could be a role model of a successful enlargement policy of Europe, which could be used now by Turkey.

In the late 20th century, once again in history Turkey showed friendly attitude towards Poland by actively supporting its efforts to join NATO. Both the countries are active within the Pact and support the US in their military operations. NATO will undoubtedly remain the most credible guarantor of security for both the countries and a their platform for developing strategic relations with the USA and the largest European countries. Of all NATO members, Turkey dedicates the highest percentage of its GDP to military spending apart from the US and Poland sees Turkey as an important ally at the South-Est EU and NATO flank. It was proved recently when the Turkish missile destroyed the Russian aircraft entering the Turkish airspace.

One of the key aspects of Poland's foreign strategy is supporting the EU enlargement process and promoting it. Officially, Poland is in favour of accepting Turkey into the EU. Former Prime Minister of Poland, prof. Jerzy Buzek speaking in the Turkish parliament as the President of the European Parliament summarised this political position in the following way: *"European Union needs Turkey. And I believe Turkey needs EU. Let us make our win-win strategy work even better"*.⁷ Indeed, many Poles perceive Turkey as a strong country in the region and

7 Jerzy Buzek, speech, Ankara, November 2011.

wish to strengthen its ties with Europe. During its presidency in the EU Council in the second half of 2011, Poland demonstrated its pro-Turkish approach by attempting to break the deadlock in EU-Turkish accession talks. Almost 67 percent of the Poles support the EU enlargement, firstly with Ukraine (55 percent) and Bielarus (31 percent), but also with Turkey (27 percent). Much less votes are for Serbia, Georgia, Russia or Montenegro.⁸

On 1 May 2004, Poland and Turkey found themselves in the same customs union. Both the countries are also working together on numerous international forums such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. The good climate in bilateral political relations has been also reflected in numerous high-level visits: in November 2013 Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan visited Poland, in March 2014 Polish President Bronisław Komorowski visited Turkey and in April 2014 the Turkish Speaker of parliament Cemil Cicek came to Warsaw. The countries concluded many partnership agreements, including two agreements on friendship and cooperation as well as the Polish-Turkish agreement on strategic partnership, signed by both prime ministers.⁹

For Poland, which has consolidated its position in the EU and started opening up to the relations with the world outside Europe increasingly more, Turkey is a desirable partner in both political and economic terms. Good political relations are conducive to establishing more intense business ties, even if much remains to be done in this respect. Polish-Turkish trade has almost tripled in 2004-2011, from 2 billion to 5.6 billion USD. In 2014, the volume of bilateral trade reached 5.8 billion USD, it is expected to grow to 6.5 billion USD in 2015 and it may even triple in 3 years, as the leaders promised.¹⁰

On both sides, there is also some unused potential in connection with foreign investment. The estimated value of Polish capital invested in Turkey is considerable: as much as 177 million EUR. From 91 companies, the largest investment was made by the Selena capital group (constructions), Smyk and X-Broke, Asseco (IT), Polpharma (pharmaceutical) and Maspex (food industry). Polish capital is invested also other sectors, such as in machinery, Energy, tourism and cosmetics. In the same time, Turkish investments in Poland are much smaller. In 2012, their cumulative value amounted to 49.5 million EUR and in 2013 only 25 million EUR.¹¹ In Poland, there are 190 companies with Turkish capital, five of them (Dallas Corporation sp. z o.o., Koç Holding, Mesa Mesken A.Ş., Polimer Kauçuk Sanayi Ve Pazarlama A. Ş., Yenigun Construction Industry and Commerce Inc.) are on list of greatest investors in Poland.¹²

8 GfK Polonia, survey 2009.

9 Visit of President Komorowski to Turkey, March 2014.

10 Declaration of foreign ministers of both the countries during their meeting in Ankara, March 2015.

11 Statistics of National Bank of Poland.

12 GUS (Main Statistics Office) and PaliIZ's (Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency) statistics,

Some years back, the Polish Ministry of Economy recognised Turkey as one of the five most promising markets for Polish companies. Poland conducted two promotion programmes in Turkey aimed at specific branches (clothing and leather goods, and cosmetics) as well as a wide information campaign. However, intensifying business contacts and making full use of the existing potential, requires determination of both countries' governments and defining priority areas of cooperation. Enormous potential lies in the energy sector, especially in the sphere of green technologies, the more so as Polish companies have extensive experience in the design, construction and servicing of Turkish power plants. Other promising trade areas are food products and components for the automotive industry, aircraft building and construction (Turkish Gullermark is building the Warsaw underground), textiles, fashion, medical equipment and services, engineering and education.

It would be worthwhile for the actions of Polish companies to be aligned with the Turkish strategy aimed at increasing innovation in the economy, which among other means modern design - an area in which Poland has a world reputation. It includes also the modernisation of the armaments industry, the power industry and environmental protection. Polish consulting firms can also join consortia in tenders for the technical assistance- type projects commissioned by the Turkish administration and financed from the IPA pre-accession funds. Huge potential lies also in innovative technologies, including innovation in the financial sector and in the field of science, between interested scientific institutions. Finally, defense industry cooperation could be very promising: in September 2015 Turkish and Polish signed several contracts (Mesko and TAI, WZL Łódz and ROKETSAN).

Many opportunities for cooperation are to be found in the tourism industry, which is Turkey's second-largest source of income, after exports. Poles travel often and Turkey is among their top destinations for holidays, together with Croatia, Greece, Spain, Italy and Egypt.¹³ It would be helpful to stimulate greater cooperation between tour operators and encourage Turkish investment in Poland's hotel infrastructure.

It is also worthwhile to consider the cooperation of Polish and Turkish companies in third countries, especially in Africa and Central Asia. This is favoured by a political and business synergy: Turkey has opened over 20 new diplomatic establishments in Africa and provides strong diplomatic support to its companies, while Poland has only 5 embassies there.¹⁴ Turkey is already taking on large infrastructural projects in Africa and is increasingly present in African public tenders, which entails sharp competition with European and American compa-

2012 and 2013.

13. Mondial Assistance, CATI survey, May 2014; TNS Polska, August 2014.

14. The 6th Embassy is going to re-open in Dakar, Senegal, in 2016.

nies that have been there 'for ever' as well as with Chinese ones. Poland could help Turkish enterprises to win such tenders with the use of Polish technologies, design and high quality products manufactured in the EU, but offered at more competitive prices than further west. In addition, Poland enjoys a positive image in Africa given its lack of a colonial past. This provides additional leverage to Turkish businesses as they seek the support of local authorities for their plans to expand onto the African continent.

Given the absence of direct contentious issues between the two countries, their importance for

European security, their historical connections and the enlargement plans, Poland and Turkey seem natural allies. The Polish-Turkish partnership could be focused on areas that are priorities for Poland and the EU (such as energy security) and on sharing experiences in developmental and regional policy, including bridging the existing gap between both countries' eastern (poorer) and western (more affluent) areas, for example.

It lies in the interest of Poland to keep Turkey close to Europe and, in the wider sense, to the West. In the eyes of the Polish elite, Turkey is an opportunity, not only in economy but also for cultural and scientific cooperation. Polish culture has been widely promoted by the Bosphorus and in 2014 Polish Ministry of Culture stimulated circa 100 artistic events in Turkey: design presentations, paintings and posters exhibitions, concerts, film festivals (among others K.Kieślowski retrospective), theatre and dance spectacles, city happenings and education projects for children and teenagers. In the same time, there were several activities presenting Turkish culture in Poland, ie: exhibition of Turkish outfits in the National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw (december 2014), concert of the Turkish Choir of Antiochia Civilisation (November 2014), Turkish Film Festival in Warsaw (October 2014) and Week of Turkish Culture and Art in Warsaw (September 2014). The celebrations of 600 anniversary ended by a concert in Warsaw attended by both the prime ministers (8 December 2014).¹⁵ Poland is also one of the most popular destinations chosen by young Turks. In the academic year 2013/2014, Turkish students amounted to 20 percent of all the students coming to Poland under Erasmus program, which made them the biggest national group.¹⁶

Such direct relations and common projects as well as intensive exchange of peoples-to-peoples contact play a crucial role to change perceptions and build trust in the time instabilities. In the recent few years, the Polish society has become more conservative and hesitating towards people coming from non-European countries, especially Muslims. Along the recent opinion polls, Poles like the most the European nations (Italians, Spanish, Czechs, Slovacs etc.) and much less:

¹⁵ Information from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as well as MFA statistics.

¹⁶ <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/aktualnosci-ministerstwo/studenci-z-turcji-coraz-chetniej-podejmuja-studia-w-polsce.html>

Russians, Rumanians (Roma), Palestinians and Turks.¹⁷ In the same time, 44 percent of Poles demonstrate „cold approach” towards islam, but almost 90 percent declare they dont know personally any Muslim. Only 23 percent of the surveyed like the Muslimisms and 33 percent feel netural to them.¹⁸

Such a strange „platonik islamophobia”¹⁹ is based not on direct experience but on information from the media. The experts stress that negative opinions towards Muslims expressed by the Polish society are not addressed to the those who already live in Poland and that the positive opinions come mostly from educated Poles who had direct contact with Muslims during trips abroad. Simultaneously, most of the responders think the conflict between the Western civilisation and the muslim world is not inevitable. 43 percent consider there is possibility to find the common, intercultural ground for reconciliation and the opposite opinion is expressed by 34 percent of surveyed. It has to be stressed however that the pessimistic option has grown in the last few years by 15 percent, mostly because of the growing tensions in the Middle East, creation of ISIS as well as recent terrorist attacks and immigration crisis in Europe.

Research show that the public opinion in Poland is divided in diagnosing sources of tensions between world of islam and the West. 40 percent consider it comes from fundamental differences such as values, religion and culture. Similar group (38 percent) think the conflict is caused by opposite economic interests and political fight. In the same time, 22 percent of responders doesn't have any opinion on the issue. 64 percent see Muslims as not tollerant towards other cultures and values, 63 percent stress there is a problem with assimilation of this minority in Europe, 57 percent associate islam with violence and thinks this religion encourages it, but in the same time 50 percent agree that most of the Muslims condemn the terrorists attacks done by Muslim fundamentalists. 49 percent of Poles think the extremism is not so much led by religion as by the poverty and lack of education, 44 percent consider that the Muslim can feel offended while one presents their religion in a bad way (ie Mahomet cartoons etc), but 35 percent dont agree with such opinion.

The mindset of people may change but it is a long process. The strategic „reset” between Poland and Turkey should take into considerations past and present in all the dimensions mentioned above. The 600 years of interactions are a good base but nothing will happened without governments stimulus and peoples' will. Common security interests, economic cooperation, exchange of experiences in enlargement and transformation processes as well as common challenges of immigration crisis are the strong assets to build a quality partnership but the future will depend on people behind all this.

17 CBOS survey, 08.2015, such surveys about perception of other nations in Poland have been regularly executed by CBOS for 20 years.

18 CBOS survey „*Polish society on muslims*”, 09.2015. It was executed 5-11 Feb on 1003 people: adult Poles all over the country.

19 Term used by dr Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, Warsaw School of Economics (SGH).

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