

BEGINNING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN GEORGIA AND TURKEY AND THE FIRST FUNDAMENTAL AGREEMENT

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Abstract. This article is about the beginning of diplomatic relations between Georgia and the Republic of Turkey and the first fundamental agreement. The signing of this agreement determined the main directions and character of relations between the two countries.

Fundamental agreements, as a rule, are the basis on which future relations between countries are built. Such an agreement between Georgia and Turkey was signed on July 30, 1992. This agreement focuses on a number of interesting issues, which often become the subject of discussion among scholars, and we have tried to express our modest approaches to them. In particular, in addition to its main content, it is this agreement that confirms the Kars Agreement signed on October 13, 1921, which establishes the demarcation line between Georgia and Turkey. According to this entry, Turkey is the only neighboring state of Georgia with which the border is officially established.

Keywords: Turkey; Georgia; Fundamental Agreement; Relations; Diplomacy.

Introduction. The Republic of Turkey is one of the most important neighboring state and strategic partner for Georgia, with which relations are interesting and beneficial in many ways. The foundation for diplomatic relations between the two countries was laid on May 21, 1992, when Turkey was one of the first to recognize the independence of Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union on December 16, 1991. Since then, a number of agreements have been signed between the two countries and relations have deepened. However, bilateral relations begin with a fundamental agreement, which we will discuss below.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin, who was on an official visit to Georgia in 1992, said: "I am proud that I had the honor to sign a document on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Georgia" (Komakhidze, 1994: 6).

After Georgia regained its independence, the Republic of Turkey was one of the first country to not only establish diplomatic relations with Georgia, but also to offer Georgia a number of assistance packages.

At the end of July 1992, an official delegation of the Turkish government visited Georgia. The delegation was headed by Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel. During the negotiations, many topical and important issues for both sides were discussed. The fundamental agreement, which had already been prepared as a result of bilateral work, was signed on July 30 of the same year; it was the Agreement "On Friendship, Cooperation and Good-Neighborly Relations between Georgia and the Republic of Turkey" (Agreement: 1992). The agreement entered into force on January 13, 1994, after ratification by the parliaments of both countries. According to this agreement, both countries recognized each other's independence, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and expressed their desire to deepen cooperation.

Methods: While working on the article, based on the content of the topic, we used qualitative research methods. In particular, a well-proven academic research method in the social sciences - the method of

document analysis. With the help of this method, we analyzed the main theses of the Framework Agreement and tried to draw objective conclusions.

Results: After signing the first fundamental agreement between Georgia and Turkey, the parties agreed to develop relations between the two countries on the basis of international law and “expand relations in political, economic, trade, scientific-technical, agricultural, scientific, transport, cultural, information, tourism, sports and other fields” (Agreement: 1992).

This fundamental agreement is interesting in many ways; the mention of the Treaty of Kars in it causes controversy among scholars, and there are still differences of opinion on this issue. In particular, at the very beginning of the agreement it is stated: “The parties declare that they will abide by the treaties and agreements concluded between them, starting with the Treaty of Kars of October 13, 1921. The parties are guided by the fact that this agreement finally established the border between the two states” (Agreement: 1992).

As we know, the Treaty of Kars was signed on October 13, 1921. This treaty was signed by the following political entities: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), the Ankara government, and all three South Caucasus Soviet Socialist Republics. The Treaty of Kars consists of 20 articles and 3 annexes. By this treaty, the Russian SFSR and the Ankara government redistributed territories and demarcated borders. This redistribution deprived the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic of its historical part - the Artvin and Artaani districts. From the Batumi region, only Batumi remained within the Georgian SSR. The city of Batumi was a city of such strategic importance that the Soviet government did not easily interfere with it or cede it. In 1923, when the Republic of Turkey was established, the historical territories of Georgia became part of the newly formed republic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the states of the South Caucasus regained their independence and the issue of their international recognition arose, the issue of historical territories naturally could not and would not be activated with Turkey. Therefore, in 1992, the rest of the world recognized Georgia within borders that approximately coincided (of course, not completely) with the borders of the Georgian SSR.

As you know, the establishment/recognition of a new independent state means that it has an official demarcation line with neighboring states, a national anthem, a flag, an officially declared state language and other regalia important for the state. Based on this context, the state border, which is strengthened by the relevant agreement, Georgia currently has only with the Republic of Turkey, and this border line is mentioned in the Kars Treaty signed about 70 years ago. That is why it was confirmed in the new fundamental agreement.

Is the Kars Treaty valid and can it be considered a valid treaty? No, of course. The Kars Treaty has no legal force. The parties signing it do not exist legally: the RSFSR was dissolved (it is true that it has a legal successor, but the subject state that signed this agreement does not exist legally); The Ankara government was transformed into the Republic of Turkey; all three republics of the South Caucasus are now independent states. That is, the Kars Treaty is a thing of the past. However, we use it because we recognize the border line specified in this treaty as the official demarcation line between the Republics of Georgia and Turkey. Accordingly, any skepticism and negative expectations in society are completely groundless and devoid of arguments. Such behavior is similar to the use of propaganda methods for certain purposes.

Unfortunately, Georgia still does not have specified borders with its remaining land neighbors (Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia). To this day, the demarcation lines that existed before the collapse of the Soviet Union are conditionally considered the border zone. However, there are also certain inaccuracies and misunderstandings, disputed territories. That is why it has not been possible to reach an agreement on these issues to this day. There are still border commissions created during the time of President Eduard Shevardnadze, which have not yet completed their work on these issues.

Let us return to the fundamental agreement between Georgia and Turkey: it consists of 15 articles and does not have any secret articles or additions.

The second article of the agreement is of great importance and highlights the importance of cooperation between the countries of the Black Sea basin. The agreement states that: "The parties will make joint efforts to develop this cooperation, to raise its status and effectiveness in every way, to attach great importance to resolving disagreements through political means, to the implementation of the idea of a regional security and confidence-building system." Promoting the development of Black Sea regional cooperation is not only in the interests of Georgia and Turkey and will not only develop cooperation between these two countries, but working in this regard with the European Union is also a prerequisite for the rapprochement of the states of the South Caucasus and the Black Sea region.

The recommendations prepared by the European Union for Georgia also repeatedly voiced the idea that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation should be established as a successful example of regional cooperation, which would be more interesting and attractive to the European Union than any country from the Black Sea region taken separately. If this union is established as an alternative to the European Union and becomes a developed economic zone, it will be an undisputed key region on the Eurasian continent, which will closely connect the East and the West, bring one of the world's major economic players, China, closer to the European Union, and bring Georgia and Turkey closer to the European Union, both together and separately.

Article 4 of the aforementioned agreement emphasizes that trade and economic relations are a priority in bilateral cooperation, and the entire next few decades have truly confirmed this ("Business Partner": 2024). To date, more than 70 agreements have been concluded between the two countries on freedom of trade, visa abolition, customs duties, construction of natural gas and oil pipelines, high-voltage electricity transmission lines and railway infrastructure, and others (Jandieri, 2016: 4-5). These superstructure agreements are naturally based on the framework agreement.

Turkey has become a member of the World Trade Organization since 1995, which has further revitalized its economy. These processes have led to the expansion of its trade and economic relations (and not only), and Georgia has also become part of these processes.

Turkey has maintained the status of a major trading partner for Georgia for years (Jandieri, 2016: 10). According to the data of the National Statistical Service of Georgia for 2024, Turkey is among the top ten export-import countries of Georgia (Foreign Trade in Goods in Georgia, 2024: 4). Turkey occupies approximately the same position in the current year 2025.

In general, the priority areas in bilateral relations look like this: literature, energy, agriculture, communications, defense - cooperation in these areas is still quite fruitful and active.

In the context of overcoming national security challenges, Article 13 of the Treaty is very important, which obliges the Parties to prevent the freedom of action of such organizations, groups or individuals on their territory, whose actions would harm the territorial integrity of any country and the basic principles of the Constitution: "The Parties undertake to prevent the actions of such organizations, groups or individuals on their territory, which aim to encroach on the territorial integrity of the other Party or to change the constitutional order by force" (Agreement: 1992). This article is a guarantee on which solid cooperation can be built, and to this day the Parties are trying to sincerely fulfill the obligation they have undertaken. The content of this article is quite broad and implies multilateral cooperation.

Bilateral cooperation in the field of defense, which began in 1992, is still ongoing intensively. Turkey helps Georgia to approach NATO standards, and its government is faithfully implementing the responsibility it assumed years ago. During these thirty years, a number of important programs have been implemented, which have significantly increased Georgia's defense capabilities and the qualifications of Georgian soldiers. Listing joint programs here would take us too far. We will cite only one recent example: in June 2024, Turkey

delivered to Georgia VURAN armored personnel carriers from BMC, one of the largest manufacturers of commercial and military vehicles in Turkey (civil.ge: 2025). At that time, the First Deputy Minister of Defense of Georgia once again emphasized the importance and intensity of these relations: "Georgia and Turkey have been cooperating in the field of defense for a long time and successfully ..." (civil.ge: 2025).

Article 8 of the aforementioned agreement stipulated that "the parties will create favorable conditions for the free movement of their citizens between the two countries, and will facilitate the signing of a relevant agreement for the development of consular relations" (Agreement: 1992). Over the years, close cooperation has moved to a new stage since 2006: Turkey simplified the visa regime with Georgia and Georgian citizens can now enter the territory of Turkey without a visa. The Sarpi and Vale border checkpoints are operating on the border of the two countries. Since 2007, another border checkpoint has been operational, for which 25 million dollars were spent. On May 31, 2011, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili opened another modernized border crossing point in Sarpi (Manchkhvili, 2024: 110).

Discussion: Both Georgia and Turkey are states of the South Caucasus and the Black Sea region, and their good-neighborly and partnership relations influence the processes taking place in the region. The partnership that began in the 1990s has grown into a strategic partnership, bringing great benefits to both sides: Turkey needs the South Caucasus region to easily connect with the Central Asian states and expand trade and economic relations, while Georgia needs more contacts with NATO. Turkey has invested a lot of effort in the process of Georgia's rapprochement with NATO. These processes were built primarily on the basis of the Fundamental Agreement.

Conclusions: The Fundamental Agreement between Georgia and Turkey signed in 1992 was a successful agreement that contributed to the development of relations between the two countries. Its signing was followed by the conclusion of a number of other, no less important agreements that gave impetus to multilateral cooperation. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Georgian-Turkish relations have already grown into strategic cooperation, and this cooperation has no alternative. A free trade agreement is already in force between the countries, which contributes to the strengthening of political cooperation between the two countries.

In the conditions of modern world challenges, there is no alternative to the development of these bilateral relations.

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