CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AND ALBANIA

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DOI: 10.26650/B/AA09.2021.009.03

ABSTRACT

Turkish-Albanian relations were established immediately after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Between the years 1923 and 1938, the new states that emerged in the Balkans, Turkey and Albania, aimed at consolidating such relations evolving not only politically but also economically. The political relations between the two states went through various vicissitudes due to a wide range of internal and external factors that affected the development of the political, economic and social life of both countries. Among the problems that emerged were the transition of the Albanian state from a republic to a monarchy, Albania's rejection of the Ottoman public debt, the issue of property inherited by Albanians in Turkey, and the claims of the Turkish government on the properties inherited from the Ottoman dynasty in Albania. However, it is important to note the significance of a number of treaties between the two countries and the establishment of mutual diplomatic missions between the countries. In addition to these political agreements, efforts were made to underwrite trade agreements. All the events and developments in both countries were presented to the Albanian press of the time, which, in turn, echoed both the economic and social reforms carried out in Turkey as well as the efforts for growth and empowerment of the Albanian state.

Keywords: Turkey, Albania, political, commercial, social relations, ottoman public debt

1. Political Relations between Turkey and Albania in 1920-1925.

1.1. The Political Climate in both Countries before the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

After the 1912 secession of Albania from the Ottoman Empire, no contact of official relations existed between the two countries until 1920. The First World War resulted in economic devastation for both countries on the one hand and changes in their international standing on the other. However, relations were not completely broken because the friendship between the people continued (Polat, 2005).

At the end of the First World War, Albania had to build the state and strengthen its national identity but Turkey, by now a weakened state, had to pay the debts accumulated over the several hundred years of the Ottoman Empire. Following the loss of the war, the fates of both countries were to be decided by the Paris Peace Conference and the needs and interests of the victorious Allied Powers. The development of the Conference proceedings encouraged the Albanians to believe that their issue would be rightfully determined only by the diplomacy of the Great Powers (Demirlika, 2013). As a result, it was highly necessary for the people of both countries to react in response to such a decision and to understand that they had to achieve liberation and expel the invaders all by themselves. In such conditions, the reaction of the people of these two countries emerged as a necessity.

Between January 21-31, 1920, Albanian delegates from all the regions gathered at the Congress of Lushnja, where the new government headed by Sulejman Delvina (Frashëri, Kujtime (vitet 1913-1933), 2003) would be approved. In addition to the measures for the consolidation of the new Albanian state and ensuring Albania's sovereign rights in the international arena, the government of Sulejman Delvina took charge of establishing a consistent diplomatic activity. To this regard, on December 17, 1920, Albania was accepted as a member of the League of Nations (Historia e Popullit Shqiptar (Periudha e Pavarësisë 28 nëntor 1912-7 prill 1939), 2007), an important step towards the reconfirmation of the international recognition of the Albanian state and, at the same time, for the recognition of the new *de jure* government (Puto, 2009). The international recognition of the independent Albanian state and the protection of the territorial integrity by the League of Nations, as well as the steps for the reform, created a favourable climate for the Albanians to focus on the establishment and strengthening of internal institutions (Meta, 2007).

The internal situation was tense in Turkey as well. The existence of two powers, on the one hand the government of the Sultan based in Istanbul and on the other the new power

established by the Turkish nationalists based in Ankara, made Turkey's governance hard to manage. Meanwhile, the continuous national struggle of the Turkish people to drive the Greeks, French, and English from Anatolia was coming to an end. On April 23, 1920, the "Turkish Grand National Assembly" was opened in Ankara, which would elect Mustafa Kemal as its loyal statesman and military leader. Alongside the task of rebuilding Turkey, Mustafa Kemal would have to pay attention to strengthening not only the relationship with neighbouring states but, in this context, diplomatic relations with the Albanian government emerging from the "Congress of Lushnja" (Öksüz, "Atatürk dönemi Türk-Arnavut ilişkileri", 1998).

On December 9, 1920, Mustafa Kemal Paşa sent a Turkish twenty-five-member military delegation to Albania with a view to further increasing his position and also to finding support. The delegation was led by two military leaders, Selahattin Saip (Shkoza) Bej and his assistant Colonel Hamdi Bej (Yel, 2003).

The purpose of the delegation was to assist the new Albanian government in organizing the country's army defence. Selahattin Shkoza Bej, an ex-military of Albanian origin with extensive experience in defence, was the right choice for this purpose. Mustafa Kemal had met Selahattin Shkoza Bej during the Balkan wars. Moreover, Selahattin Shkoza Bej was also an active participant in the Albanian club of Izmir and during his visit to Albania, he was invited by the Prime Minister Ilyaz Vrioni to serve as the "Minister of Defence" in his government (Alpan, 1975). Selahattin's main role was to organize an Albanian army similar to the "Turkish National Army" (Müstakil Arnavutluk, 1921). After Selahattin Shkoza Bej obtained the Albanian citizenship, he would be elected deputy of Prizren in the Albanian National Council. He was the first Albanian military leader to draft an important legal map for the Albanian army, thus entering its history not only as a "Minister of Defence" but even as a prominent reformer (A.Gjinaj & F.Lila, 2012). Selahattin Shkoza Bej would initially be engaged in the formation of a national army with four regiments: in Shkodra, Tirana, Përmet and Gjirokastra (Vllamasi, 1995). Historical literature confirms that Selahattin Shkoza Bej had come to Albania upon Atatürk's order (Özcan, Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Arnavutluk ilişkileri (1920-1939), 2011). This fact is also confirmed by the correspondence between Atatürk and Selahattin Shkoza. In a letter sent to Selahattin Shkoza Bej on December 9, 1920, Mustafa Kemal expressed his appreciation for the position Selahattin Shkoza Bej held in the Albanian government as "Minister of Defence" and further delineated the values of establishing a state-friendly connection with the Ankara government (Açaroğlu, 2003).

Contrary to the reality, the foreign press, especially the Balkan press, began to worry and spread the news that the two countries, Albania and Turkey, co-existed in friendly relationship and cooperation (AQSh, 1922).

Countries such as Yugoslavia and Greece claimed that Albanian troops had been commanded by Turkish officers and that the organization of the Albanian army had been distorted in preparation for war in co-operation with Turkey.

There was some truth in these allegations, such as the fact that many Albanian officers and officials had served Turkey and that many had held senior positions. Even the Minister of War, Selahattin Bej, was also accused of obstructing military operations for his personal Kemalist sympathy. At the same time, rumours circulated that he had conspired to bring one hundred and twenty officers from Turkey to be assigned to the top military posts (Gurakuqi, 2007).

At that time, due to the international circumstances, Greece refrained from any hostile actions towards Albania, which would undoubtedly have made Italy, Yugoslavia, and other powers take actions against such offence. Meanwhile, Greece was striving to earn the sympathy of Great Britain, which had strained all relations with Kemalist Turkey. Consequently, Greece's main interest was making possible the connection of Albanian nationalism with Turkish nationalism (Swire, 2005).

According to the Bekir Meta, at the core of Greek politics was the promotion of religious differences and dissatisfaction in Albania and the idea that Albania was a 'small Turkey' (Meta, Attempts to consolidate national identity in 1920-1924, 2007).

1.2. Towards the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

In December 1922, when Ahmet Zog took the lead of the Albanian state, his upmost interest and the overall situation required that a balance in the diplomacy of the Albanian government be established. What was considered as an advantage was the recognition of the Albanian state by a large number of other states during 1922. Such recognition explains why Prime Minister Ahmet Zog tried to develop a policy seeking to establish diplomatic relations in foreign policy as soon as possible, especially with neighbouring countries (National Council Talks, 1923). Another important factor was the establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey, where an Albanian colony had already lived and worked since its establishment in 28 November 1912 (History of the Albanian People, 2007).

In this new political situation, the Albanian government, prompted by the demands of Albanians living in Turkey, was forced to seek and take appropriate steps to establish diplomatic relations with the new Turkish government in Ankara (AQSh, 1922).

At this time, the Ankara government did not recognize any kind of agreement signed by the Sultan's government. In this context, the legal functions of any former administration officials were not recognized, nor was a passport office opened in the spring of 1920 to defend the interests of Albanians living in Turkey. The Albanian government made efforts to get in touch with the new Turkish government, initially recognizing the Albanian consular office set up in Istanbul. On January 5, 1923, during a meeting with the Istanbul Commissioner Adnan Adivari Bej, Nezir Leskoviku raised the issue of the Albanian passport office. To support his position, Adnan Bej explained that he would seek instructions from Ankara on the matter of the Albanian passport office in Istanbul and its return to the consular office. A month later, at the second meeting with the representatives of the Albanian Passport Office, Mr. Nezir Leskoviku and Adnan Bej required that, for the opening of the office, the Albanian representative directly address the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the "Grand National Turkish Assembly", Ismet Paşa, telling him about the duties he had performed and clearly defining if the required agreement was of "consular" or "diplomatic" nature (AQSh, 1923). This attitude indicated that the new Turkish government would not recognize any previously-made agreement and that negotiations had to kick off from the beginning to establish new diplomatic relations (AQSh, 1923).

In mid-June 1923, Ali Kolonja, the Albanian representative in Belgrade, conveyed his request to Turkey's representative in Belgrade to establish political relations with Ankara's government (AQSh, 1923).

After receiving a favourable opinion from Ankara, the Turkish representative reported the response to the Albanian representative. Thereafter, in order to establish political relations between the two countries, the Turkish government began to send a delegation to Ankara, while the Albanian government began preparations for establishing political relations with Turkey (Shqipëria e Re, 1924).

For establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey, the government of Albania set up a delegation headed by Eshref Frashëri Bej as spokesperson of the parliament, along with a secretary-general and a Minister of Foreign Affairs, Xhafer Vila and Nezir Leskoviku (AMPJ, 1923).

Meanwhile, a commission of ten members was set up in the Turkish National Assembly, headed by Xhevat Abaz, who took the initiative to hold talks on establishing diplomatic relations with Albania.

A few days later, the newspaper "Shqipëria e Re" ['New Albania'] published the news that "the Turkish government had invited the Albanian government to send representatives to

Ankara to set up a consular agreement between the two states”. (Shqiperia e Re, 1924). This invitation would mark the transition to establishing diplomatic relations.

1.3. Turkey-Albania Diplomatic Relationship Pact

The Albanian delegation which arrived in Istanbul on October 17, 1923, was welcomed by a large number of Albanian citizens living in Istanbul together with Turkish authorities (AQSh, 1923). The delegation travelled to Ankara by train on 23 October, the eve of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic’s declaration and the election of Mustafa Kemal Paşa as the first president (AQSh, 1923).

In Ankara, the Albanian delegation met the Prime Minister Fethi Okyar Bej, who once again mentioned the Albanian government’s desire to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries, as well as the recognition of the Albanian consulate in Istanbul and the recognition of Albanians living in Turkey as Albanian citizens (AQSh, 1928). However, the Albanian delegation received no support from Fethi Okyar Bej on citizenship issues.

Ahead of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Turkish government required the signing of a treaty as a prerequisite (Akçaya B., 2018).

The proclamation of the Turkish Republic was accepted by various countries including Albania. On the occasion of the announcement of the Republic of Turkey and the presidential election of Mustafa Kemal Paşa, on October 31, 1923, the Albanian Prime Minister Ahmet Zog sent Prime Minister Fethi Bej a congratulatory telegram (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

On November 1, 1923, the newspaper “Dielli” [‘Sun’] published the news that Fethi Bej’s government had resigned. The President of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal, had already charged Ismet Paşa to create a new cabinet upon receiving the Albanian delegation on the same day (Dielli, 1923).

Ismet Paşa assured the Albanian delegation that Turkey’s interests demanded that Albania be further consolidated and strengthened in the Balkans (Öksüz, Atatürk dönemi Türk-Arnavut ilişkileri, 1998).

On November 13, 1923, the Turkish newspaper “Vakit” [Time] announced the start of Turkish-Albanian talks. The Turkish party was represented by Şükrü Kaya Bej, who held the post of Minister of Internal Affairs and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Alongside him were two members of the delegation appointed as legal advisers, Nusret Bej and Refik Bej.

According to Şükrü Kaya Bej, since the members of the Albanian delegation had graduated from universities in Turkey, a quick and satisfactory conclusion of the diplomatic talks was possible. In his opening remarks, Şükrü Kaya Bej noted “the old traditions of friendship that linked the Turkish people to the Albanian people, emphasizing the Turkish government’s desire to see Albania as a dignified country with an independent political life.” (BCA, 1923). Initially, the Turkish party proposed a treaty of friendship, a principle that the country followed with all governments establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey. The model was the previously-signed Turkish-Polish model.

The Albanian delegation declared that the task of both parties in these talks was to seal the long-established friendship between the two nations, and, equally, to express gratification since the first treaty of friendship with the Albanian state was signing with the Turkish “brotherhood”. Eshref Frashëri, chairman of the Albanian delegation, also commented on the latest revolutionary traditions of the Albanian people, as well as the Turkish nation’s wars for freedom at the end of World War I and thereafter (Demirlika, 2013).

Furthermore, he emphasized the common Albanian-Turkish interests, stating that both countries had relied on their own forces for their liberation and had dedicated their existence to the said forces (Vakit, 1923).

On 15th December 1923, at the end of prolonged talks, three agreements were signed in Ankara, which together formed *The Treaty of Friendship* (Gazeta e Korces, 1924). These three agreements were: the Agreement on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, the Agreement on Residency and the Agreement on Citizenship.

These agreements were the starting point for the development of the Turkey-Albania relationship. It was these agreements that set out the legal framework for political relations with Turkey. However, the agreements were not ratified at that time due to Albania’s troubled political situation. Implementing the agreements would require both the ratification in the respective parliaments and exchange in Ankara (Özcan, Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Arnavutluk ilişkileri (1920-1939), 2011).

The Turkish government was interested in developing relations with Albania. During this period, namely the 1920s and early 1930s, the Turkish government worked intensively on its foreign policy to improve and maintain relations with its neighbours, and to maintain the *status quo*, albeit with great difficulty (Zurcher, 2013).

Meanwhile, during this period, the Albanian government began to pay attention to the expansion of the inter-state relations with the Republic of Turkey, in political, economic and commercial terms. The development of these relations was important for the Albanian state since a large number of Albanians who lived in Turkey were facing a number of economic, social and political problems after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the new Turkish state. In addition, given that Albania had long been under Ottoman rule, the new Albanian government aimed, through these relations, to create a way in which documents in the archives of Istanbul and especially in the cadastral registers could serve the state administration in regard to property issues (Musaj, 2018).

The signing of the agreements between the two countries was reported not only in the Turkish press but also in that of Albania and of Balkan countries. The Turkish newspapers, “Hak” (Righteousness), “Akşam” (Evening), “Barış” (Peace) praised as fair the relations between the two countries.

2. Relations with Turkey in 1925-1928

2.1. The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the two countries

Until the beginning of 1925, diplomatic relations still existed at consular level. The Albanian consulate continued to perform its functions but it was not officially recognized by the Turkish government and, as such, faced legal obstacles and difficulties in communicating with the Turkish state authorities (AMPJ, 1923). In this situation, the consul Nezir Leskoviku suggested that the Albanian government ratify the agreements in the Turkish National Assembly as soon as possible (AMPJ, 1924). Once the political situation inside the country was stable, the President of the Republic of Albania, Ahmet Zog, began to pursue an active policy in relations with European countries. In this context, he paid special attention to the ratification of the treaties signed with Turkey. According to the Albanian archives, the Ratification of the agreement was fulfilled on February 22, 1925, by the Albanian Parliament and signed on March 3, by the Albanian president Ahmet Zog (Öksüz, Atatürk dönemi Türk-Arnavut ilişkileri, 1998).

On the occasion of the enforcement of “The Treaty of Friendship” by the Turkish party, Ahmet Zog, on 19 April 1925, sent a friendly letter to Mustafa Kemal. In the letter, Zog wrote: “Inside your Republic, in Ankara, a group of parliamentarians has been established to pursue the continuity of relations according to the protocol signed by both parties as a token of the restoration of friendliness and goodwill between the two nations. ... the perfect past inter-relations between our nations (people) are the proof of the friendship between our nations and

I hope that in the coming years through these agreements written “in the name of friendship and peace ” (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993)

This pact was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on April 6, 1925 (Ökçün, 1962). On May 31, 1925, following ratification by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, agreements were exchanged in Ankara. According to Rauf Fico, they were personally signed by the President of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüştü Bej (Historia e Shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX, 2020).

On the occasion, on July 28, 1925, Mustafa Kemal sent a letter to the Albanian government confirming the establishment and strengthening of friendly relations between the two countries and expressing his aspiration for the development and expansion of relations in the field of commerce (AMPJ, 1923).

A month later, the Turkish government, through the Albanian consul in Istanbul, Nezir Leskoviku, expressed the request to the Albanian government to open the Turkish consulate in the city of Vlora and Aptülahat Akşin was appointed consul in that city (Musaj, 2018). The opening of a consulate in a port city helped develop trade relations between the two states. Another reason for the opening of the Turkish consulate in Vlora was the fact that the consulate would serve Ankara to observe the tendencies of Italian politics, considering that Vlora was a neuralgic political node for Rome. That same year, the Turkish government accepted the reopening of the Albanian consulate in Istanbul, which was approved by the Albanian Parliament in October 1925 (Fletore Zyrtare, 1925).

A report sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana from Istanbul confirmed that on February 9, 1926, Tahir Lütü Tokay, a career diplomat, was elected as Turkey’s first minister in Albania. Tahir Lütü Bej was the first Turkish Ambassador to be appointed in Albania. On February 17, 1926, he was received by the President of the Republic, Ahmet Zog, where he presented his credentials (AMPJ, 1923). He also brought with him a letter from Mustafa Kemal for the Albanian president. After handing over the credentials, Ahmet Zog expressed his immense satisfaction about the stability of the Albanian-Turkish relations. He further admitted the importance of the reforms that the new regime in Turkey was undertaking in various areas of political, social and economic life, becoming an example for all Muslim countries, especially for Albania. He also stated his special sympathy for Mustafa Kemal supporting every step of the policy pursued by the Turkish government. On the same day, Tahir Lütü Bej informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara about this meeting, which he considered an excellent reception (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanlar, 1993).

Due to the seriousness the Turkish government demonstrated in establishing diplomatic relations with Albania, (Bello, Marrëdhëniet Shqiptaro-Turke 1912-1939, 2015) the President of the Republic Ahmet Zog sent a letter to Mustafa Kemal, on January 17, 1926, informing him about the appointment of Rauf Fico as representative of Albania in Ankara (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

On March 13, 1926 Rauf Fico presented his credentials to the President of the Turkish Republic in Ankara (AMPJ, 1923). He expressed his pleasure to be the first representative of Albania in Turkey and ensured his contribution to the strengthening of the relationship and friendship between the two countries. On his behalf, Mustafa Kemal promised the Albanian diplomat his consistent help and that of the Republican government for the consolidation of friendly relations between the two nations.

2.2 Albania's Economic and Administrative Issues in Relation to Turkey

With the end of the Turkish-Greek War and upon declaration of Turkey's victory, a Conference was held in Lausanne to establish a peace agreement between Turkey on one side and Greece and the Entente states on the other. The Conference began its work on November 22, 1922.

At the session of November 27, 1922, among the various issues dealt with at the Conference in the context of economic and financial matters was also that of Turkey's public debt (Dette Publique Ottoman), which was to be divided among the successor States.

During this meeting, the chairman of the Turkish delegation, Ismet Paşa, proposed that the arrears of the Ottoman State be shared with other states detached from the Ottoman Empire (Lozan Barış Konferansı (LBK) Tutanaklar-Belgeler, 1993).

Following this proposal, Albania was requested to be part of the sessions discussing economic and financial issues. According to Halil Özcan, with the participation of Albania in these sessions, the delegations of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) and the Government of Albania met for the first time in an international conference (Özcan, Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Arnavutluk İlişkileri (1920-1938), 2011).

Initially, Albania was unofficially represented by Benoit Blinishti, the representative of the Albanian state at the League of Nations in Geneva.

The conference began before the Albanian representative could arrive, and discussions on the Ottoman Public Debt began on 7 December. This session also required payment from

Albania. Albania's representative, Benoit Blinishti, explained to the speaker of the hearing that he had no competence to speak on behalf of the Albanian government because of his presence as a listener, but he emphasised that he would refer back to the official Albanian representative as soon as he arrived (AMPJ, 1923).

During this session, three main issues were discussed: 1) reimbursement of military occupation expenses; 2) payment of war damages; 3) Ottoman public debt, and other financial matters.

On December 2, 1922, according to archival documents (AMPJ, 1924) Mehdi Frashëri was appointed as official representative to the Conference of Lausanne by the Albanian government. During the session of December 19, 1922, the Albanian representatives Mehdi Frashëri and Benoit Blinishti also attended the discussions on the inherited debts of the Ottoman State.

The head of the Albanian delegation, Mehdi Frashëri, made a statement on behalf of the Albanian government in this session regarding the liquidation of the inherited debts of the Ottoman State: He stated that:

- a. The Albanian Government had accepted the voluntary invitation to attend the Lausanne Conference on the consideration and distribution of Ottoman public debt.
- b. The Albanian government wanted the restoration of peace and international credits to be two preconditions for the harmonisation and rebuilding of the Balkans and the Near East in general. (Lozan Barış Konferansı (LBK) Tutanaklar-Belgeler, 1993).

In January 1923, during the finance session of the Conference of Lausanne, it was decided that states emanating from Ottoman rule should repay certain sums to Turkey in the form of public debt. The Albanian state was assigned an amount of 1,633,233 Turkish Lira (AMPJ, 1924).

Representatives of the Albanian state who attended this session, Mehdi Frashëri and Benoit Blinishti, opposed the Turkish side's request, refusing any financial obligation of the Albanian state to Turkey (Bisedimet e Këshillit Kombëtar, 1923).

Therefore, discussing this issue, the Albanian delegate officially considered it his duty to present his assessment at the subcommittee meeting. He gave this assessment:

1. With regard to the liquidation of Ottoman State debt, Albania was obliged to be treated in the same way as the other Balkan states that had broken away from the Ottoman

Empire under the Berlin pact, given the fact that Albania was economically more backward than those states. Albania's economic situation was so underprivileged that it could not be compared to the situation during the period when other Balkan states gained independence.

2. With the exception of the former prefecture built in Scutari, the Ottoman State in Albania had not built production and housing facilities; neither had it provided useful facilities to serve the population such as railways, sewers, schools, etc.
3. From 1909 until 1921, Albania had turned into a field of war and occupation. In World War I, although Albania maintained a neutral stand, two-thirds of the country was destroyed and plundered leaving nothing behind. With the military occupation of Albania by the Central European Empires, starting in 1915 and later, livestock, which was the only property possessed during wartime, was periodically robbed. Although other Balkan states relied on their political life after independence, Albania not only saw little help in this regard, but, due to the fragile economic situation in the world at that time, there was no hope that in the near future the country would receive any external financial help (AMPJ, 1924).

‘In a nutshell’, Mehdi Frashëri declared, ‘Albania is unable to pay (Frashëri, Kujtime, 2005).

On January 15, 1923, the Albanian representatives at the Conference proposed that the debt for the railways be assessed separately from the total debt and divided between the countries through which the railway passes. On the same day at the session, discussions were held on the rights of citizens who had acquired the right to receive a pension for services rendered to the Ottoman State and who had subsequently immigrated to Albania.

During these discussions, Mehdi Frashëri stated that Austria had deposited 30 million kronor in the Austrian bank *Vienerbank*, an amount which Austria had provided as a budget surplus during the occupation of Albania. Consequently, the Albanian representative proposed that if Albania had to be part of the Ottoman State Debt, this amount should therefore be deducted from the money Albania had to receive from Austria. Moreover, representatives of the “Great Powers” who played the role of arbitrator at the Conference did not accept the requests delineated by Mehdi Frashëri.

According to the instructions given by the government, the Albanian delegation did not sign the statement in which Albania had to formally commit to participate in the Ottoman

Public Debt Allocation. This position moved the delegates of the Great Powers to pursue a diplomatic course on this issue, which meant that they tried to come to an agreement directly with the Albanian government.

On November 7, 1924, the Istanbul-based Ottoman public debt administration submitted an official letter to the representatives of Albania detailing the annual liabilities of each state (AMPJ, 1924).

The Albanian government maintained a negligent attitude and did not respond to the letter. However, the Turkish government did not give up on its request.

In January 1926, the president of the Administrative Council of the Ottoman Public Regulations based in Paris handed over to the Albanian Legacies the tables setting out the amount the Albanian state had to pay each year until the complete liquidation of the Ottoman Public Debt. The same request was made to the representative of Albania in Turkey, Rauf Fico, on June 6, 1926, by Xhavit Bej, who was Turkey’s representative in the matter of the Ottoman Public Debt. According to Xhavit Bej, Albania was entitled to pay 1.57% of the amount or 90,300 Turkish Lira per year (AMPJ, 1926).

Table 1: The amount of debt each country owed to the Ottoman Public Debt (in Turkish Lira) (Dikmen, 2005)			
Country	Amount of Turkish Lira	Country	Amount of Turkish Lira
Turkey	84,597,495	Jordan	733,610
Italy	243,200	Iraq	6,772,142
Albania	1,633,233	Necit	129,150
Bulgaria	1,776,354	Hicaz	1,499,518
Greek	11,054,345	Asir	26,138
Yugoslavia	5,435,597	Yemen	1,182,104
Syria and Lebanon	11,108,858	Mal	128,728
Palestine	3,284,429		
Total 129,605,910 Lira			

As at other times when the position of the Albanian government needed to be expressed, the representative, Rauf Fico, opposed the Turkish side’s request. Albania declared to the Turkish authorities that it refused to pay any public debt and did not intend to pay it. The stated reason was that, since Turkey had spent the money it had received from Albanian taxes elsewhere and not in Albania, where it had caused destruction and had not restored anything, Albania had no obligation to pay (AMPJ, 1926).

Another issue of interest to the Albanian government that dealt with relations with Turkey was the cadastral registers. In the context of the reform of the state administration, Ahmet Zog, the president of Albania, also paid attention to the establishment and functioning of the cadastral service in Albania, establishing cadastral offices in all prefectures. The purpose of this service was to study the state cadastre, determine the boundaries of state property and at the same time evaluate them. In order to achieve this goal, and for the purpose of the economic development of the country, precise formalization of properties for the cadastral registration of landowners was important and required. During the First World War, Albania had gone through a chaotic situation that had damaged and destroyed many buildings and sites. There was a lack of accurate registers and relevant documentation for the administration of state property. In these conditions, Ahmet Zog ordered that accurate data be obtained through registries in the Istanbul Cadastre and asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to handle them carefully and inform the authorities whether they should obtain copies of the registrations that Albania needed. He also suggested sending a commission to Istanbul to extract accurate data on the matter (AMPJ, 1927).

In January 1927, the Albanian government addressed the Turkish government with the request that they allow a commission set up by the Albanian counterpart to extract the necessary data from the Istanbul Archives and Cadastre (AMPJ, 1927).

However, the official Ankara Law Enforcement Agency of the State Archives rejected the Albanian government request, explaining that such action could only be carried out by Turkish state archives officials (AMPJ, 1927) .

Thereafter, Ahmet Zog instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to consider and come up with a preliminary agreement with the Turkish government to send one or two officials to co-operate with Istanbul archives employees.

Between 1925 and 1928, the two governments agreed to prepare the signing of the Trade Agreement, the Extradition Treaty, and the Consular Convention. In August 1926, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, via the Ankara Legate, transmitted to the Turkish Government the Council of Ministers' decision to conclude a Turkish-Albanian trade pact. Ankara accepted the proposal and suggested that the deal be completed in the Turkish capital (Ankara) and in the Albanian capital (Tirana) to begin a discussion on the conclusion of an Extradition Pact and a Consular (AMPJ, 1926).

Despite the treaty signed with Turkey on March 15, 1925, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs ruled that it would be useful to make trade agreements with Albania, given that it

would contribute to political relations. To this end, before the signing of a trade agreement with Albania, the consulate of the Republic of Turkey in Vlore prepared a comprehensive report on Albania's economic situation, specifically emphasising Albania's economic structure in the 1921-1924 report and economic relations with other countries, particularly Turkey. The information in this report was intended to aid the successful fulfilment of the treaty with Albania. This report was also briefly published in the newspaper "Cumhuriyet" (1927).

In October 1927, Albania's Council of Ministers decided to accept the Turkish government's proposal and concluded the final trade agreements with Turkey (AMPJ, 1926). The Trade agreement was signed in Ankara in July 1927 and became official in May 1928, after its publication in the "Fletore Zyrtare" [Official Journal] (Özcan, Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Arnavutluk ilişkileri (1920-1939), 2011).

2.3. Italian-Albanian Pacts and their reflection on Turkey-Albania relations

Turkey declared its support for Albanian politics, for the efforts to reform social life, and for its independence. Turkey considered Albania to be part of its family during the progress of the implementation of the reforms. During the same period of time, Ahmed Zog, elected President of Albania on January 31, 1925, for a period of seven years, tried to develop his country both from inside and out to raise it to the level of developed countries, such as Turkey. A. Zog declared that his goal was to civilize the people and make them adopt Western habits and customs. To achieve this goal, Albania like other Balkan states, had to reject the Ottoman legacy and strive to catch up with the rest of Europe (Tomes, 2001).

Zog's first priority was to create a political structure that would be strong enough to withstand the inevitable strains of rapid modernization. Immediately after coming to power he set about consolidating his power and liquidating or exiling the most difficult of his former 32 opponents (Vickers, 2001).

Between the years 1925 and 1928, after stabilizing the political situation of the country, Ahmet Zog gave great value to foreign policy. In order to strengthen the state's economy and finances, Zog made efforts to obtain foreign loans for assistance. He initially turned to the League of Nations for help, but the call remained unsuccessful. The Albanian government tried to set up connections with powerful states such as England, but the Commonwealth state retreated because of the Italian interests in the Balkans. The Albanian government tried to build regular relations with neighbouring states such as Greece, the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, and Turkey.

In 1925, the Albanian government officially recognized the Greek minority in Albania. In accordance with international law, it would respect rights on the basis of reciprocity. Meanwhile at the end of that year, after signing the Treaty of Lausanne, Albanian-Greek relations began to take a downturn. In 1925, the Treaty of Friendship between Albania and Turkey came into force and diplomatic relations were established. In 1926, the Trade and Navigation Treaty was signed with the Belgrade government, and efforts were made for a friendship treaty. The Belgrade government tried to promote separatist movements in the country and through them pushed Ahmet Zog to be closer to pro-Yugoslav politics but, in the end, they failed. The increasing number of his political opponents and their empowerment pushed Ahmet Zog to strengthen his foreign policy with Italy. Meanwhile, not only economic agreements but also political-military pacts would be signed within a short time. In March 1925, the Albanian government and the Italian financial group signed the convention for the establishment of the National Bank of Albania (Ushtelenca, *The Diplomacy of the King Zog*, 1997).

Due to the lack of experience in the production of banknotes, Italian economists launched a type of banknote that was not well received by Albanians due to the way it was composed. In Turkish documentation, this act was regarded as Italy's first political attempt to expand into Albania. In the same month, the Albanian government entered into another contract with several Italian shareholders to obtain a loan for the country's economic needs. The Society for Economic Development of Albania (SVEA) was established on May 29, 1925, and the Albanian government signed a significant financial agreement (Özcan, *Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Arnavutluk İlişkileri (1920-1938)*, 2011).

In the same month, the Albanian government entered into another contract with several Italian shareholders to obtain a loan for the country's economic needs. The Society for Economic Development of Albania (SVEA) was established on May 29, 1925, and the Albanian government signed a significant financial agreement (Cumhuriyet, 1925).

Under the financial agreement, Albania would secure a financial loan of 70.5 million gold francs that would have to be repaid over a 40-year period. This loan would be guaranteed by the functioning of Albanian customs and the right of state monopoly up to 8.5 million francs per year. Italian-Albanian agreements sparked a backlash in Belgrade that angered Ahmet Zog. To escalate the tensions and irritate Zog, the government of Belgrade proposed that Mussolini might divide Albanian lands among them but, unfortunately, Mussolini roughly rejected the said proposal (Pastoreli, *Italie e Albanie 1924-1927*, 1967).

On July 29, 1926, Ahmet Zog met with Tahir Lütfi Bej, the Turkish Ambassador in Tirana, to discuss the take-over of the rebellion for the collapse of the Albanian government by the opponents of the Albanian regime in Italy and the bringing into power of the former Ottoman prince of that time, Omer Faruk (son of the last caliph Abdül Mayid Efendi). According to Zog, the former prince had gone to Brindisi and Bari to meet with the opposition. Ahmet Zog also briefed Tahir Lütfi Bej on the measures taken by the Albanian government to take action against Italy.

Considering the circumstances, Turkey tried to help and support Albania. In this regard, a few days later, the Prime Minister Ismet Pasha ordered the Turkish embassy in Tirana to inform the Albanian government and Ahmet Zog that, based on the reports of the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki, Zog's political opponents had also been split into two groups. The reports would later emphasise that one group was planning to stage an armed uprising, which would consequently lead to Zog's assassination 4-5 weeks later (BCA, 1927).

Threatened both internally and externally, Ahmet Zog proposed to Yugoslavia that Albania become a member of the Lesser Entente, which Belgrade rejected on the grounds that this coalition was intended to protect the interests of Central European states and no members outside it were to be accepted (Politika, 1926).

The overt political ties with Italy gained intensity in November 1926 when the two states signed a pact pledging friendship and mutual support. This pact guaranteed the Italian government's right to maintain the political and territorial status quo in Albania, and this included Zog's own personal regime. In 1927, Zog's fear of Yugoslavia increased and this pushed him to rely more on Italy. In the same year, a second pact was ratified between the two countries which allowed permanent settlement of a large Italian military mission to be based in Albania. In this way Italy had gradually increased its economic and politic interest in the country (Vickers, *The Albanian a Modern History*, 2001).

On 27 November 1926 Zog was forced to sign a "Friendship and Security Pact" with Italy, namely the First Tirana Pact, on a five-year term. This Pact was met with various international opinions. The European states held two opposing positions on it. Its signing raised a storm of outrage and caused a political crisis in Yugoslavia, but there were also states that understood its connection and regarded it as a necessary diplomatic step for Ahmet Zog. The Turkish government also maintained a positive attitude towards the pact.

On January 3, 1927, Rauf Fico, the Albanian ambassador to Ankara, announced that during a meeting with Teuvfik Rüştü Bej, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, they had

also discussed the agreement with the Italians. Analysing the circumstances of Albania, the Turkish Foreign Minister stated that Albania was under pressure from Yugoslavia and there was nothing left to do about this situation. Since Belgrade had not accepted the proposal made by the Albanian president, it was only natural that there would be consequences. He considered the Pact to be a rightful act of the Albanian state, which, in his view, had all the legitimate right to establish political relations of this kind with Italy considering Yugoslavia's hostile activity towards Albania. Teuvfik Rüşti Bej informed the Albanian representative that the Yugoslavs had wanted to make a non-Balkan pact that excluded some states in the region, in order to benefit from Turkey. As for Albania, 'since we have good relations with Italy, we want not to ruin these relations for Yugoslavia', said Teuvfik Rüşti Bej (Bello, Marrëdhëniet Shqiptaro-Turke 1912-1939, 2015).

On January 10, 1927, Rauf Fico met with Prime Minister Ismet Paşı Inonü, who commented on the treaty that the "Albanians knew their jobs better than anyone else", and that Turkey had no objections at all. The Turkish Prime Minister further emphasized this attitude towards Albania: "We want to help you as far as you ask us for help, but first we want you to notify us in time, not at the last moment". Turkey's stance was also reinforced by the Prime Minister, who nevertheless cautiously warned that the Albanian government had not consulted Ankara in advance on this important political step (Pastoreli, Italia e Albania 1924-1927, 1967).

On November 11, 1927, a five-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between France and Yugoslavia was signed in Paris, followed by an Arbitration Convention and a secret military agreement signed on the same day. This event was delineated as an anti-Albanian step in Tirana and as anti-Italian in Rome. This agreement led to the signing of the Defence Alliance or the Second Tirana Pact between Italy and Albania, on November 22, 1927. The signing of the Second Pact did not elicit any negative reaction from Turkey, on the contrary, the Turkish government, following Albania's example, entered into diplomatic treaties to sign a similar pact with Italy.

Following the example of the treaties concluded between Albania and Italy, in the first months of 1928, Turkey stepped up diplomatic activity to conclude a similar pact with Rome. On February 20, 1928, the Turkish ambassador to Rome, Suad Bej, paid an official visit to Mussolini, to whom he proposed that a treaty of non-aggression and neutrality be concluded between Turkey and Italy. This proposal was welcomed by Mussolini (DDI, 20.02. 1928). The Turkey-Italy Treaty was signed on May 30, 1928 (Sosyal, Tarihceleri ve açıklamaları ile birlikte Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları, 1983).

3. The Kemalist Republic and the Albanian Monarchy

3.1. Turkey's attitude towards the proclamation of the Albanian Monarchy

The coming to power of Ahmet Zog in 1924 and the period of Republican transition (1925-1928) marked a turning point in the history of the Albanian people. The Albanian Republic, founded by Zog at the beginning of 1925, was a reflection of his clever political tactics, not only in the context of the Albanian reality but also of the international one (Duka, From the Presidency to the Monarchy: Issues of Legitimacy, 2011).

Despite having been the target of intrigue both within and outside the country, Zog succeeded in changing the country's development by pushing it onto the path of economic recovery. Since other neighbouring monarchical states were constantly plotting to either overthrow Zog or incite actions against him, Zog mindfully considered the change of regime to be the only way to strengthen both his political power and the country (Shekulli i Ri, 1928). Furthermore, the concept of monarchy was not something new for Albanians. The transition to the monarchy system in 1928 was just a return to a well-known and practiced system in Albania since the Ottoman period. This form of government was also related to the origin of the Albanian state, when the Great Powers first recognized independent Albania as a Principality headed by the then appointed Prince Wied (Wilhelm Wied). The monarchical form of government, called Collective Regency was also applied by the Congress of Lushnja (1920) (Historia e Shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX (1925-1939), 2020).

Therefore, prior to the idea of becoming King of Albania, Zog thought of obtaining support from Italy after the signing of the Second Pact of Tirana in 1927. Ahmet Zog considered Italy as his main international ally, and thought of taking advantage of such beneficial alliance along with the establishment of the new regime and the increase of financial aid for the budget of the Albanian state (DDI, 1927).

The state and a large part of the Italian press, which played an important role in persuading other European Chancelleries and the European public opinion, were significant factors in facilitating Ahmet Zog ascending to the throne and his longevity (Duka, From the Presidency to the Monarchy: Issues of Legitimacy, 2011).

Ahmet Zog would also address the British for support (TNA, 1928), confirming with such action the great importance and influence that London had in the field of international relations. Ever since he was president, Zog tried to convince the British that monarchy rule

was indispensable to Albania, since a republican form of government had failed to guarantee adequate security for a new state just emerging from internal turmoil. Zog himself declared to Hodgson, British Envoy in Albania, that he was convinced that, besides the Italians who welcomed Zog's benevolent change of plan, he had received a neutral if not sympathetic response from the rest of Europe (Fischer, 2000).

Overall, European diplomatic representatives were convinced of the influence of Italian diplomacy, which in turn was very active to give the green light to changes in the form of government in Albania.

In addition to support from abroad, further support came from the local press in which pro-regime articles were published (Regime Again, 1928). On September 1st 1928, the Constituent Assembly approved the new Constitution. It was announced that it had unanimously decided to establish a monarchist regime and declared Albania a Democratic Parliamentary and Hereditary Kingdom, and Zog I as the King of Albania (Selenica, Albania in 1937, 1938).

Within a short time, the Albanian monarchy was recognized by many European and Balkan states, but this new institutional change of state was not recognized by Yugoslavia and Turkey. Yugoslavia feared the monarchy because it thought that behind it were intentions to include all Albanian population groups and territories within the borders of the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom (Zautner, 1939).

Meanwhile, the Turkish President Mustafa Kemal opposed the recognition. The proclamation of the Albanian monarchy was reported to the Turkish Grand Assembly through a letter sent by the Turkish ambassador Tahir Lütü Bej in Tirana as follows: "Dear Members of Parliament. Today at 9:15 am, Albania was proclaimed a Kingdom and President Ahmet Zog was proclaimed King of the Albanians under the title of Zog I" (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

However, the Turkish ambassador in London informed his government that the British Central News Agency had received a telegram from Istanbul to inform them that even Mustafa Kemal would soon be proclaimed King (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

The same story was also reported in some articles published in prestigious English dailies such as "The Daily Telegraph" and the "Manchester Guardian", as well as in some French newspapers, which wrote that Mustafa Kemal would follow the path King Zog I had taken. The Turkish Embassy in London was requested by Ankara to immediately refute the

above news (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993), while Mustafa Kemal on September 5th declared he would never acknowledge the new regime (AQSh, 1928).

On September 7 the newspaper “Cumhuriyet” (Republic) wrote that “the present reaction in Albania, since national sovereignty prevails as the only God in our country, was received with amazement and anger by the Turkish side. Turkey should quickly withdraw its representative from Tirana (Cumhuriyet, 1928). In the same newspaper, on September 10, an ironic article on the proclamation of the Kingdom in Albania was published, calling it the “Operetta of Tirana” (Cumhuriyet, 1928).

According to information available from the Albanian representation in Ankara, it was Mustafa Kemal who insisted on not recognizing Albania’s new royal regime. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüşti Aras, and several other dignitaries begged the President of the Republic to change his stance, but he refused (AQSh, 1928).

On October 3, 1928, as soon as Mustafa Kemal returned from vacation, he urgently called on the Turkish embassy staff to return to Turkey. Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüşti Aras, called on Tahir Lutfi Tokay, the ambassador to Tirana, to return to Turkey. The Turkish ambassador went to Ankara and never returned to Tirana. The first secretary of the embassy, Fuat Bej, remained as Chargé d’ Affaires *ad interim* (AMAE, 1929).

In an interview for the newspaper “Le Petit Parisien” on October 8, 1928, Mustafa Kemal criticized Ahmet Zog’s action and stated that even if he were the only one not to recognise Zog Kingdom, he would never acknowledge him or his Kingdom (Le Petit Parisien, 1928). Mustafa Kemal restated his refusal to recognize the regime openly in an interview with Herry Bero, a journalist of “Le Pettit Parisien” (*Le Petit Parizien*, 1928).

He stated: “How can I approve the Albanian Kingdom! (Le Petit Parisien, 1928). ‘No, don’t talk to me about it. - I don’t recognise him. - A man should never betray his nation!’ The president, according to Atatürk, was the first soldier in the service of the republic and, as such, he should have been the last to abandon its defense. (AMAE-AP, 1928).

While Mustafa Kemal’s interview was published not only in the Turkish press but also in the English press, in Tirana the interview was received with disappointment. Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish press continued their criticism against Ahmet Zog. After Atatürk’s opposition, the most important Turkish newspapers launched a campaign against Albania and King Zog. Given the situation, the Albanian Foreign Minister Ilyaz Vrioni asked the Italian representative in Rome to intervene with the Ankara government, exerting all its influence, to have the

Turkish press moderate its attitude and speed up the official recognition of the Albanian Kingdom the delaying of which was becoming inexplicable (AMAE, 1928).

Italian Foreign Minister Dino Grandi thought that the main reason behind Turkey's refusal to recognize the Monarchy was related to the fact that Tirana had not previously consulted with Ankara about such decision. Such a reasoning was also confirmed by both the Turkish ambassador in Rome and King Zog. Zog communicated to the British representative that Atatürk had found it difficult to adapt to the fact that Albania, which had developed under the tutelage of Turkey as a Muslim-majority country, was taking such an important step without having consulted with Ankara. According to B. Fisher, concerning this position, Zog stated that Mustafa Kemal could not accept that Turkish tutelage be rejected in Albania. Furthermore, there was still an unresolved dispute that had arisen between the Albanian government and the Turkish government concerning the ownership of some lands belonging to an Albanian married to the daughter of Sultan Abdülhamitî (Fischer, 2000). According to B. Fischer, Ahmet Zog had confiscated some lands belonging to Sultan Abdülhamitî. Last but not least, the real cause of the difficulty to recognize the Albanian Kingdom must have been Mustafa Kemal's antipathy towards Ahmet Zog (Fischer, 2000).

Meanwhile, in Albanian historiography, author Gazmend Shpuza wrote about Mustafa Kemal's disapproving attitude towards the proclamation of the Albanian Kingdom as "a right attitude consistent with both his republican principles and the interest of both parties in preserving and strengthening Albanian-Turkish relations" (Shpuza, 1994). Such disapproving, if at times justifying, attitude exceeding Atatürk's responsibility is also noticed in the studies of Turkish authors (Özcan, Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Arnavutluk ilişkileri (1920-1939), 2011).

According to reports sent by Albanian consulates in Istanbul, the Turkish press persisted in supporting the Turkish leader. Articles published in new Latin letters were occasionally written against the royal regime of Albania (AQSh, 1928).

According to B. Fischer, problems with Turkey did not bother Zog that much, as he thought that he needed no longer to keep in touch with Mustafa Kemal. It was indispensable for Albania to detach itself from the negative influence of Turkey. To this regard, he also took a number of measures including the issuance of a covert order banning the import of Turkish newspapers into Albania (Historia e Shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX, 2020).

Another measure taken by the Albanian president was to change the name Zogolli to Zog by removing the suffix "oğlu". He did this to bolster his image as an Albanian national king. Mustafa Kemal's refusal to recognize King Zog's Kingdom did not serve at all to strengthen

the Turkish-Albanian relations, on the contrary, it stimulated unnecessary elements that heightened displeasures in the diplomatic relations between the two countries. King Zog allowed relations with Turkey to deteriorate if not discontinue, a situation which underwent a positive turnabout in November 1931.

King Zog saw the strain of relations as an expression of his political viewpoint and the direction which he wanted the monarchy to follow in terms of foreign policy. He wanted to be a European King rather than an Eastern Sultan King or successor. Indeed, he tried to be a master in foreign policy, especially in relations with his neighbours, but at some point, he was caught between his political dualism, a combination of a European King of oriental inclinations.

Turkey's attitude caused further deterioration of Albanian-Turkish relations. The withdrawal of Tahir Lutfi Bej from Albania was accompanied by a sign of reciprocity, with the withdrawal of the Albanian ambassador to Ankara, Rauf Fico.

This act marked the reduction of diplomatic relations between the two countries, at the level of *chargé d'Affaires*, a task to be performed by the secretaries of the respective Legates. These cold relations continued for three years.

The Albanian Consulate in Istanbul was closed in 1930 and all employees were forced to return home. Unlike the Albanian counterpart, with the exception of the consulate in Vlore, Turkey did not close his Embassy in Tirana. The fact that it remained open, albeit with limited activity, indicated that this was a "modus vivendi" until a time in the future when things would get better.

3.2. Turkish Government claims on some properties in Albania

On January 20, 1929, the Albanian *chargé d'Affaires* in Istanbul, Asaf Xhaxhuli, reported to the Albanian government that an article had been published in the newspaper "Son Saat" about the Turkish state assets located in Albania, and which once belonged to the family treasury of the Ottoman Empire of "Hazine-i Hassa".

This article was probably published to test the pulse of the Albanian state, since the next day the Director of the Anatolian News Agency called Mr. Xhaxhuli and asked if the Albanian delegation wanted to deny this news because according to them, this news was based on "private" and officially unconfirmed sources. Asaf Xhaxhuli denied such a fact, responding that he was unaware of the news and therefore the Albanian Legatee did not find it necessary to refute it.

Table 1: The state properties that belonged to the family of the Ottoman “Hazine-i Hassa” family, which after the declaration of independence were passed under the administration of the Albanian state (Shkoza, 1935) (see table below)

Prefectures where estates were located	Estates	Arable land (ha)	Meadows (ha)	Pasture (ha)	Forests (ha)	Vacant land (ha)	Amount (ha)
Berat	119	13,636	662	12,994	10,793	4,200	42,285
Durrës	39	2,528	227	2,665	1,020	1,005	7,445
Gjirokastër	8	150	60	2,834	81	81	3,630
Shkodër	1	-	-	-	-	-	120
Vlorë	7	92	28	1,500	7	1,150	2,777
Tiranë	1	30	-	-	-	-	30
Amount of hectares	175	16,436	977	19,993	11,901	7,115	56,287

In 1933, the Turkish Embassy reiterated the demand for the issue of 22 estates. Quoting the names of several other claimants, they demanded that the revenues deposited until that moment be filed. The Albanian government did not reply. However, the Turkish Embassy reiterated the request, demanding a conclusion.

As Turkish-Albanian relations had just begun to normalize during this period, upon Mustafa Kemal and his government’s recognition of the monarchy to avoid any diplomatic incidents, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered the Albanian representation in Ankara to ask the Turkish government to provide a copy of the maps of the property belonging to “Hazine-i Hassa” in Albanian lands. This request of the Albanian representation in Istanbul was interpreted by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its favour, recalling that the Albanian state would also liquidate the issue of 22 estates (AMPJ, 1926).

These claims by the Turkish government continued for several more years. Apparently, this was a form of pressure to force the Albanian government to renounce the demands for restitution of the Albanians’ inherited property in the territory of the Turkish Republic. For a clearer picture and more complete data, the Albanian government took an interest in analogous cases in countries that were once part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs distributed a circular to the Albanian Embassy in Sofia, Athens, Belgrade and London, informing them of the claims of the Turkish Embassy and asking them for information on how these issues were dealt with legally and how they were selected in the respective states (AMPJ, 1926).

Information received in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed that in these countries the Turkish Embassy had not made any claims about the temples or properties held in these countries as lands of the former Ottoman Empire.

3.3. Restoration of the Relationships

In modern Turkish history, it has been stated that Mustafa Kemal wanted the Balkan countries to survive as nation-states and to be independent with all their rights, and free from all the imperialist state's political games. As a result, he believed that the Balkan countries, which had collaborated and lived together for centuries, should have a strong alliance and even unity. On the one hand, he tried to prevent disagreements among Balkan countries but on the other, he made efforts to unite the nations and people of this region. The influence of Italian politics on Albania was not new, but Italy's immediate aspiration focused on Italian expansion in the Balkans and beyond under the slogan or concept "Mare Nostrum" (Latin for "Our Sea").

Aware of such danger, the Balkan states decided to come together to find ways of co-operation that would serve their mutual protection. They first met at the Balkan Conference in Athens from October 5th to October 12th, 1930. The First Balkan Conference was attended by Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania.

In order to create a climate of cooperation with the Balkan states, and especially with Turkey, but also to continue with Albania's accession to the Balkan Pact, there were debates on Albania's participation in the Second Balkan Conference in Istanbul. This event was seen by King Zog as an opportunity to demonstrate his independence in the field of foreign policy and as a way to completely reduce or eliminate Italian influence (Fischer, 2000).

The King instructed his delegation to work together with the Turkish delegation at the conference to try to mend relations between the two countries. The Albanian delegation arrived in Istanbul on October 7, 1931.

Evidently, the resurgence of relations between Turkey and Albania was presented at the Second Balkan Conference convened on October 20, 1931, in Istanbul with the participation of six Balkan countries. Mustafa Kemal sent a congratulatory telegram to all the presidents of the countries participating in this conference (TNA, 1931). In the telegram addressed to King Zog, on October 26, 1931, he expressed his friendly statement towards Zog and the Albanian nation. On the same day, the head of the Albanian delegation Mehmet Konica telegraphed enthusiastically from Ankara to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana: "Friendly reception. The recognition is official. We warmly request the King to respond to the telegram of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, as soon as possible and in a friendly manner, so that the official relations can begin." (AMPJ, 1931).

On October 29, 1931, King Zog also responded Atatürk in an equally friendly message. On the same day, Turkey's *charge d'Affaires* in Tirana, Zeki Haki Bej, went to the offices of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, where he stated that he had received instructions from Ankara to enter into official relations with the Albanian government.

A period of friendship between Albania and Turkey had begun again. King Zog expressed his admiration for Atatürk and sent him greetings on the anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. Also, Atatürk responded on the national holiday of Albania's independence. The restoration of Albanian-Turkish relations was widely published in the Albanian press (*Vullneti i Popullit*, 1931).

On December 5, 1931, for the first time in four years, King Zog publicly received Turkey's *chargé d'affaires*, Zeki Haki Bej. The Turkish diplomat reported that the King at the meeting spoke Turkish eloquently, and sincerely stated that "there are sacred things associating Albania with Turkey, things that could never be touched and I am personally rejoiced of overcoming misunderstandings and recognizing the regime." King Zog also expressed the respect he felt for Atatürk, as well as his high praise towards Atatürk and all Atatürk had done for the development of Turkey (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

King Zog signed the decree on the reopening of the Albanian Embassy in Ankara on January 28, 1932, and on February 20, Nezir Leksoviku handed the letter of accreditation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Şükrü Kaya Bej. Prime Minister İsmet Paşı İnönü showed a friendly attitude towards Nezir Leksoviku. In a conversation he held with the Albanian diplomat, he asked about the treaties with Italy and especially about the effects of the global financial crisis. King Zog decreed Xhavit Leksoviku Bej as Albania's representative in Turkey (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

On May 14, 1933, the Albanian Embassy in Ankara was reopened and the newly-assigned ambassador, Xhavit Leksoviku Bej, a diplomat with a long military career, upon his arrival in Ankara and prior to presenting his credentials, gave a statement to the press: "Let me express my appreciation and admiration for Turkey. For a man like me who was educated in Turkey, who served in the Turkish army, it is natural to have a deep love for this country. I am happy that some of my friends today are important personalities in the new Turkey, and I do see big differences. The opportunity to look closely at the Turkish renewal and revolution gives me great pleasure from this time on. This revolution that stunned the world has raised Turkey and the nation in the eyes of everyone. Turkey's saviour, Mustafa Kemal, is one of the few greatest historical figures of these centuries." (*Cumhuriyet*, 1933).

As part of efforts to include Albania in the Balkan Pact, on October 21, 1933, Mustafa Kemal had sent the Secretary-General of the Turkish Presidency, Rüşen Eşref Üneydin, to Tirana in the vest of ambassador of his country. He also sent several messages in which he emphasised, inter alia, the friendship and the high considerations that Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish government had for the Albanian people and state, therefore defining the basis on which the relations between the two countries were to be built in the future. Rüşen Eşref Üneydin's duty was to elevate the Turkish-Albanian brotherhood and friendship (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

On 2 April 1934, Rüşen Eşref Üneydin departed from Ankara and on 8 April, he arrived at the harbour of Durres. On April 18, 1934, King Zog welcomed the Turkish Ambassador to Tirana, Rüşen Eşref Üneydin, to his palace. During 1934, a warm climate of cooperation between the two countries was evident, but due to financial issues, a crisis the Albanian government was going through, it was decided to cut the budget by forcing the closure of several embassies, including the one in Ankara. Turkey amicably understood such an action and Teuvfik Bej expressed his wish to have Ankara (AMPJ, 1934) serve as the permanent centre of the Albanian ambassador for the Albanian embassies in Greece and Turkey. Following the talk, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that Ankara be the permanent centre of the two Albanian embassies of Greece and Turkey.

During the summer of 1934, the Turkish ambassador tried to persuade King Zog that Albania would also join the Balkan states. The King's tendency to pursue an independent policy was welcomed by the Turkish press and praised as a factor for securing peace in the Balkans.

The efforts of King Zog in this period to get closer to Turkey were also determined by the aggravation of the Albanian-Italian relations. Zog sought to escape Mussolini's pressure. Albanian-Italian disagreements found coverage in the Turkish press. Some of them wrote that Italian influence was coming to an end (Cumhuriyet, 1934).

According to the Turkish press, Albania had finally realised that it should entrust its cause and policy to Balkan politics.

Rüşen Eşref Üneydin was appointed ambassador in Athens and he left Tirana on October 15, 1934. The famous writer Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu took his place. On January 12, 1935, the ambassador was also received by King Zog. His arrival was hailed by the intellectual elite of Tirana, some of whom had been educated in Turkey and knew his work very well. He was considered to be one of the best personalities of the Turkish literary world (Minerva, 1934).

In an interview with the Albanian press, he stated that Turkey had very good relations with the Balkan states and that his aim was to ensure broad economic and cultural co-operation.

The following year, in January 1936, Zog's sister's marriage to Sultan Abdülhamid II's ex-sultan son, Prince Abedin, created unfavourable circumstances and affected Turkey-Albania relations. The King himself was aware that this marriage would create misunderstandings. According to the Turkish government, this marriage was politically motivated and there were concerns about Turkey's future. In Ankara's diplomatic circles, the marriage was regarded as an Italian intrigue to restore the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish ambassador did not attend the wedding ceremony. Princess Sanije's marriage to Prince Abidin created unfavourable circumstances for Turkish-Albanian relations.

Turkey's reaction to this event was immediate because, according to the Turkish government, this marriage had a political connotation and was a concern for Turkey's future (AMPJ, 1936). Turkey's reaction to the event was demonstrated by the withdrawal of its ambassador Yakup K. Karaosmanoğlu from Albania and appointing him elsewhere (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993). The ambassador's attitude towards this marriage was not disclosed to the Turkish people, and Zog's government announced that the ambassador's departure from Tirana left a very bad impression on the Albanian people. The same year King Zog closed the Albanian embassy in Turkey and this time he really had financial difficulties.

This marriage led Albania to come under Italian influence again and resulted in its withdrawal from both the Balkan Pact and Turkey. On December 10, 1936, Ali Türkegeldi was appointed Turkish ambassador in Albania (BCA, 1936).

On February 2, 1937, the new Turkish Ambassador Ali Türkegeldi presented his credentials to King Zog. In his reception, King Zog had stated that "although there were problems between the two countries, they could be overcome quickly and leave no trace. According to him, Italy and Albania had interest-based relations, but with Turkey such relations stemmed from genuine friendship and a shared past of both countries" (Şimşir, Atatürk ve Yabancı Devlet Başkanları, 1993).

On January 19, 1938, Hulusi Fuad Tugay was appointed new ambassador in Tirana and Asaf Caculi was appointed as ambassador from Albania in Ankara that year.

On April 1938, the day of King Zog's marriage to Countess Geraldine Apony, Atatürk sent a congratulatory message. He formulated a friendly greeting which could not reach the royal court because of his worsened health conditions.

On November 10, 1938, the first President of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the modernization of the Turkish people passed away. Atatürk's death caused great sadness in Albania in all social groups in the country. In a sign of respect and solidarity with the Turkish people, some Albanian media outlets, such as the "Gazeta e Korcës" [Korca Newspaper], "Jeta e re"[New Life]; "Demokracia" [Democracy] published photographs and articles about Atatürk's life and work worshipping his work for the good of his country (AQSh, 1938).

Conclusion

Turkish-Albanian relations have been important for both countries. They are not only a significant part of the historical politics of the two countries but also of Balkan culture and beyond.

"The Friendship Treaty" signed between Albania and Turkey was a precious political stone not only in the relations between the two countries but also in the Balkans, as it became part of the circle of peace treaties signed by Turkey, opening new avenues for friendship and strengthening political, economic, cultural bonds between the two countries and the people of the Balkans.

Turkey was a new republic and all the people were required to accept and support the republic. Albania, after the transition from republic to monarchy, was no longer able to shape a political line of its own. Understandably, the people of both countries would be influenced by these events for centuries together. On the one hand, this move to change the system was not well received by the Turkish government and Atatürk. The motive for this attitude was the political philosophy of the leader of the Turkish state. The recognition of the Albanian Monarchy by the Turkish government would take place in 1932. On the other hand, in Albania, there were many supporters of the Republic and this created a political danger for the king. After all, the aggravation of relations between the two countries was not only due to the change of leadership but also to international politics that emerged during the World War II.

The relations of the Albanian Kingdom with Mussolini and the aggravation of relations between Atatürk and Mussolini during the same period was another reason why Albanian-Turkish relations were occasionally interrupted. In some of his speeches, Mussolini is well-known to have claimed his intention to take over some Anatolian territories from Turkey, which Turkey protested against.

King Zog's attempts to restore relations with Turkey at this time were determined by the aggravation of Albanian-Italian relations, as observed during the years 1932-1934. Turkish diplomacy also seized this moment. King Zog wanted to escape the pressure of Mussolini, who sought Albania's customs union with Italy, through ties with France and rapprochement with the Balkan states. The crisis in Albanian-Italian relations reached its peak on June 2, 1934, when 22 Italian warships arrived at the harbour of Durres. England advised the King of Albania to agree with Mussolini. Albania was extremely poor and the Italians had intentionally or unintentionally destroyed Albanian morale through the ineffective methods used by Rome.

Albania was obviously in need of economic assistance. Facing the heavy financial burden, the country would therefore accept any offer and settle any economic and political relations to overcome the crisis. The first conditions Italy imposed on Ahmet Zog were to denounce Albania's existing trade agreement with other countries on the one hand, and have the new deals concluded only with Italy's consent on the other. Rome also demanded that Ahmet Zog make the promise that Albania would refuse to join the Balkan states. At this time the Balkan states themselves were not able to play the role of the assistant. Romania and Turkey were geographically distant whereas Greece perceived international complications, especially with Italy. Yugoslavia, despite many promises, was not financially stable. As a result of such developments, the chances for Albania to be admitted to the Balkan Pact were non-existent.

In a nutshell, the Albanian government was obliged to borrow from Italy, a relation which was extremely enslaving. Italy did not come to terms with Albania until it forced Albania to capitulate on April 7, 1939, at which point Italy occupied Albania.

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