

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF UZBEKISTAN–TURKEY RELATIONS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the formation and development of historical, political, economic, and cultural relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Uzbekistan. It explores the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious affinities of the two nations, the restoration of diplomatic ties following independence, official visits, strategic partnership, trade-economic cooperation, and relations in the fields of education, tourism, and defense. The article also addresses intergovernmental ties within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States and prospects for future cooperation.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Turkey, historical relations, diplomatic ties, Turkic peoples, strategic partnership, trade, education, tourism, Organization of Turkic States, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

After Turkey recognized the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan and diplomatic relations were established, the Turkish Embassy in Tashkent opened in April 1992, and the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Ankara began operating in January 1993. A Consulate General of Uzbekistan was also opened in Istanbul.

The First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, paid official visits to Turkey in December 1991, June 1994, and November 1997. In October 1998, he participated in celebrations dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. In turn, Turkish Presidents Turgut Özal, Süleyman Demirel, and other high-ranking officials made several official visits to Uzbekistan.

As a result of these visits and dialogues, the contractual and legal foundations for bilateral relations were established. Notably, a Treaty on Eternal Friendship and Cooperation was signed between Uzbekistan and Turkey, along with 78 other agreements in the fields of politics, trade and economy, science and technology, military and military-technical cooperation, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, legal assistance, healthcare, transport, tourism, culture, and others[2].

The meeting between the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, and Turkish President Ahmet Sezer in September 2000, held on the sidelines of the UN “Millennium Summit”, played an important role in strengthening bilateral relations. On November 17, 2016, President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, paid a visit to the city of Samarkand.

Within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Uzbekistan proposed the establishment of the Imam Bukhari International Research Center in Samarkand, aimed at fostering scholarly and interreligious dialogu[1].

Currently, nearly 500 Turkish firms and companies are operating in Uzbekistan. The volume of Turkish investment attracted into Uzbekistan’s economy has exceeded 1 billion USD. On October 25, 2017, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, paid a state visit to Turkey at the invitation of President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Turkey was the first country to recognize Uzbekistan's independence. In 1996, a Treaty of Eternal Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the two countries.

The visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Uzbekistan in November 2016 demonstrated Turkey's strong interest in strengthening cooperation with Uzbekistan. The two presidents held bilateral negotiations on May 14, 2016, during the “Belt and Road” Forum in Beijing; on September 10, during the OIC Summit on Science and Technology in Astana; and also met in September during the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly[3].

On May 25, 2017, the next session of the Uzbekistan–Turkey Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held in Tashkent. Promising directions for cooperation were also outlined during the business forums held in Tashkent on September 30, 2017, and in Istanbul on October 6, 2017.

At the conclusion of the negotiations, more than 20 documents covering various areas of bilateral cooperation between Uzbekistan and Turkey were signed. Presidents Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signed a Joint Statement of the heads of state. Additionally, several agreements were concluded to develop cooperation in trade, industry, banking and finance, investment, tourism, freight transport, healthcare, personnel training, defense, and other fields [4].

Cooperation between Uzbekistan and Turkey, based on mutual trust and friendship, is rapidly developing. At the invitation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, paid a state visit to our country from April 29 to May 1, 2018. Currently, more than 300 investors are operating by taking advantage of the favorable conditions created in free economic zones. On February 19, 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, paid an official visit to Turkey at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan[5].

Cooperation in the field of transport is expanding. In particular, in 2019, cargo transportation by road increased by 33%, by rail by 17%, and by air by 42%. Currently, flights are being operated from Istanbul to Tashkent and Samarkand. In the future, flights to the city of Bukhara are also planned[6].

In conclusion, relations between Uzbekistan and Turkey are developing both economically and spiritually. Numerous agreements are being signed between the two countries. In recent years, the cooperation between these two nations has continued to grow, creating a solid foundation for the further development of both states.

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