

Letter to the Editor

ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF UZBEK-TURKISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Alisher Azamhocayev
Uzbekistan Ambassador to Ankara

When it comes to Turkey, there is a fact that is always remembered with great gratitude and gratitude in Uzbekistan: When Uzbekistan stepped into the world of international relations, the first state that greeted Uzbekistan as “welcome” was brotherly Turkey. In reality, it was supposed to be like this, and that’s what suits Turkey. In a speech he made in 1933, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said, “Today, the Soviet Union is our friend, our ally. We need his friendship today. But one day the Soviet Union will disintegrate like the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We have brothers in the Soviet Union who have one religion, one language, one historical. We must be ready for those days! Being ready is not sitting and waiting. They cannot come to us we must go to them. Bridges must be built. Language is a bridge, faith is a bridge, culture is a bridge,” he said. 58 years after this speech, our Turkish brothers, who recognized and supported independent Uzbekistan in every way, fulfilled these promises of Atatürk.

With the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries on March 4, 1992, more opportunities have emerged in our bilateral solidarity and cooperation. However, when we look at the historical records,

it is clearly seen that the relations between Maveräünnehir (Transoxiana) and Anatolia are not limited to thirty years. It is a fact that two brotherly peoples, thousands of kilometers apart today, once grew up in the same cradle. It is written in the history books that during the Karakhanlılar (Karakhanid) and Seljuk dynasties, scholars from Maveräünnehir such as Alaüddin Samarkand and Ebu Bekir Kasani came to Anatolia and carried out scientific and embassy activities. Abdülhalik Gucdüvani, who is the first link in the “Seven Pirs” chain, which is highly valued in Uzbekistan, was originally of Anatolian origin and was brought up in a family that came from Malatya and settled in Buhara. Ali Kuşçu, the closest student of Mirza Uluğ Bey, also came to Istanbul from Samarkand, introduced his teacher’s valuable books and ideas and taught classes in the Hagia Sophia Madrasah.

While Turkey, which hosts more than 350,000 manuscripts, ranks first in the world in this regard, scholars of Turkestan origin have a unique contribution to the formation of this valuable heritage. As a matter of fact, it has been admitted by experts that most of these manuscripts are either the work of a Transoxiana scholar or an annotation of his work. As a matter of fact, when the manuscripts collections in Turkey are examined; Tens of thousands of works by scholars from Buhari, Neseî, Harezmi and Fergani are encountered. In fact, this is a bright proof of the scientific, spiritual, political and diplomatic relations between our countries that have been going on for centuries. Yes, there is also evidence showing that our political-diplomatic relations date back to ancient times. The regular diplomatic correspondence between the Ottoman Empire and the khanates established on the territory of our country, the exchange of embassy delegations, at least 500 historical documents about the Uzbeks who came to Anatolia, which are preserved in the state archives of Turkey, clearly show the depth of our relations on this issue. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Uzbek lodges operating in the Ottoman Empire were, in a sense, the first consulates of Uzbekistan in Anatolia.

The 1920s, when a new administrative system was established in Turkey, witnessed our diplomatic exchanges. Information about the Uzbek delegation, which came from the Republic of Bukhara about 100 years ago

and wished Mustafa Kemal Atatürk victory in the War of Independence and gave him valuable spiritual gifts, is included in the archive documents of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In addition, it is a fact that the money and arms aid sent to Turkey through Moscow during this period was actually the Bukhara Emirate treasury. By the way, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the author of the National Anthem, which was accepted in 1921 and sung with pride by every Turkish citizen, is the son of an Uzbek woman from Buhara. On the other hand, while the 16 stars reflected in the Turkish Presidency's pennant represent the great Turkish empires in history, it is important that more than half of them are states established on the territory of Uzbekistan. Interestingly, such an interpretation of 16 stars was suggested by Akib Özbek, an Uzbek immigrating to Turkey, and accepted by Turkish authorities.

In Uzbeks, there is a proverb called "Borsang - qarindosh, bormasang - begona". This means "if you go to visit your relatives often, the love and respect between you will increase, and if you don't, you will be no different from strangers". In this context, it is also true that there have been some differences in the worldview and imagination of our peoples, who developed in two different environments, during the nearly 70-year separation period. We must also admit that our relationship, which started rapidly in the first years of our independence, entered a period of stagnation for some reason in the 2000s. It would not be appropriate to dwell on the reasons for this now. However, it is a fact that the main reason for the sharp turn in our bilateral relations is directly related to the new foreign policy and political will of the President of Uzbekistan, Şevket Mirziyoyev, who came to power in 2016.

Everyone will remember that on 17-18 November 2016, after a 13-year hiatus, President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan paid an informal visit to Uzbekistan. However, not everyone knows that the organization of the visit was not easy, and that Shevket Mirziyoyev, who was the acting president of the country at that time, made a decisive decision with great courage despite invisible obstacles. Thanks to the visionary and smart decisions of Şevket Mirziyoyev, a new era was entered in Uzbekistan's relations with Turkey, and the ice in between started to melt.

When the 30-year period of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Turkey is evaluated in general, it can be said that the last 5 years have been an exemplary stage in the history of our relations. The official visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Turkey in October 2017 was in many ways the opening of this historical page. Within the scope of the aforementioned visit, which took place at the president level after 21 years, 22 new agreements were signed and it was announced that bilateral relations had reached a strategic level. By the way, it should be noted that this year marks the 5th anniversary of the foundations of our strategic relations.

The open and sincere conversations of the President of Uzbekistan with the President of Turkey during the said visit, and the meetings held in an atmosphere of longing and excitement among our delegations, were the footsteps of our further intensification of relations from now on. Indeed, in the following years, the number of mutual visits increased. The visit of the President of Turkey to the cities of Tashkent and Bukhara on 31 April-1 March 2018, the visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Ankara to attend the first meeting of the Uzbekistan-Turkey Strategic Cooperation Council on 19-20 February 2020, 11-12 November 2022 It is also worth remembering his visit to Istanbul to attend the next Summit of the Turkic Council.

Particularly, the participation of the President of Uzbekistan in the opening ceremony of the National Library affiliated to the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, as the only high-level guest from abroad, within the scope of his visit in February 2020, was a clear indication of the scope of relations between the two countries and the value Turkey puts on Uzbekistan. In his speech at the said opening ceremony, the President of Turkey clarified why the President of Uzbekistan was invited as a guest and said, "Uzbekistan is the most important of our life springs, where our conception of civilization is especially shaped, where scholars are trained, and which awaits our world of science, wisdom and culture. Scholars such as Biruni, Mirza Ulug'bek, Ibn-i Sina, Harizmi, Ali Kuşçu; Our spiritual leaders such as Imam Bukhari, Imam Maturidi, Imam Tirmidhi, Bahaud-din Naqshbandi are the gifts of Transoxiana to us. For example, Uluğ Bey lit a fire of knowledge that has not been extinguished until today, with

the observatory he had built next to the state director for 36 years. This science-loving monarch, who transformed his palace into an academy and brought together the famous scholars of his time, had the hadith “Getting knowledge is obligatory for both men and women” was engraved at the entrance of the Bukhara Madrasa. The star catalog we call Zic-i Uluğ Bey was considered the most perfect work prepared until the telescope was found. This scientific climate fed and enriched Tashkent and Ankara, Samarkand and Konya, Bukhara and Bursa, Khiva and Edirne in the same way for centuries. I believe that we have given a very important message to the whole world about our common civilization by opening our National Library on this meaningful day together with its Personal States.”

Close friendship and sincere brotherhood established directly between heads of state; It offers favorable opportunities for cooperation between ministries, government agencies and institutions. In the last five years, dozens of mutual visits have been made at the level of Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers, and hundreds of mutual visits across sub-organizations, governorates and municipalities, and clear and important results have been obtained in cooperation and exchange of experience. Considering all these achievements, it was announced during the President of Turkey’s visit to Uzbekistan on March 29-30, 2022 that bilateral relations were raised to a new level, a comprehensive strategic partnership. Thus, the two brotherly countries have entered a period of comprehensive strategic partnership in the 30th year of their diplomatic relations.