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TURKISH-UZBEKISTANI RELATIONS: How Do Islam Karimov's Regime and His Opponents Affect the Bilateral Ties Between Ankara and Tashkent?

Keywords: International Relations, Islam Karimow, Turkey, Uzbekistan.

ABSTRACT: This article examines the role of Karimov regime and his opponents in influencing Turkish-Uzbekistani relations in the 1990s and its consequences for later developments. Following the description of the characteristics of Turkish-Uzbekistani relations, it will be discussed how far had the opposition leaders such as Abdürrahim Polat and Muhammad Salih an impact on the worsening of the bilateral ties between Turkey and Uzbekistan. This article then stresses Turkey's attitude towards Uzbek opposition leaders which finally addresses the reasons for worsening of Turkish-Uzbekistani relations such as the bombings of Tashkent, Uzbek students in Turkey, Gülen Movement as well as the ideology of Pan-Turkism.

Due to the enormous efforts of Turkish President Turgut Özal following the declaration of independence of Uzbekistan in August 3, 1991 the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations have been laid on a solid ground that were worsened immediately after his sudden death in April 1993. In that time Özal was the key person regarding Turkish foreign policy towards Central Asia who developed as a pragmatic leader close personal ties to the leaders of Central Asian countries. On the other hand, Özal supported some Turkish groups such as Fethullah Gülen Movement¹ for their activities in

¹ Gülen is an Islamic preacher from Turkey and the leader of a liberal-Islamic movement called after him. Education, dialogue, tolerance, non-violence, democracy, morale and modernity are the core terms of Gülen's thoughts. Since 1982 Gülen gained through public diplomacy and good relations with Turkish governments a publicity in Turkey.

the educational field. The followers of Gülen founded a lot of schools in Central Asian countries, that are known as “Turkish schools” (Türk okulları) in literature.² In order to gain influence on Central Asian countries Turkey propagated backed by the West Turkish model (Türk modeli)³ in this region, which was even promoted by Islam Karimov for a time of length. However, after a while he rejected this model strictly. So he wanted to give Russia a sign that Uzbekistan was not keen on deepening bilateral ties to Turkey. Another reason for the freezing of Turkish-Uzbek relations was that Uzbekistan considered Turkey rather as a rival than a partner in Central Asia.

This article examines the role of Karimov regime and his opponents in influencing Turkish-Uzbekistani relations in the 1990s and its consequences for later developments. Following the description of the characteristics of Turkish-Uzbekistani relations, it will be discussed how far had the opposition leaders such as Abdürrahim Polat and Muhammad Salih an impact on the worsening of the bilateral ties between both countries. This article then stresses Turkey’s attitude towards Uzbekistani opposition

Especially this movement is well-known through the foundation of hundreds of private schools as well as dormitories not only in the Turkic republics of Central Asia in other parts of the world as well. Gülen movement has thousands of members that make it the biggest Islamic movement of Turkey. For Turkish schools in Central Asia see F. Türk, *Die Türkei und Turkmenistan- eine besondere Beziehung*, „Südosteuropa Mitteilungen“ 2009, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 38–53.

² B. Balci, *Orta Asya’da İslam Misyoneleri. Fethullah Gülen Okulları*, (translated by Ali Berktaş), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul 2005, pp. 207–208.

³ Turkish model is a state model which implies the secular and capitalist market economy as an Islamic state. Other two main components of the Turkish model were the cooperation with the West and the multi-party system. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the West propagated this system for the Central Asian states and promoted Turkey as a model in the region in order to dampen the upcoming radical Islamic influence from the Iran. When the West realised that Iran would not have exported its own Islamic regime to the newly independent states of Central Asia and Iran was not influential in the region as expected by the West and Russia returned back to the region, the Western governments then were not interested any more in promoting Turkey in Central Asia in this respect. For the Turkish model see detailed İ. Bal, *ABD’nin Orta Asya Politikası*, in: Emine Gürsoy-Naskali, Erdal Şahin (eds.), *Bağımsızlıklarının 10. Yılında Türk Cumhuriyetleri*, Haarlem, 2002, pp. 225–259.

leaders which finally addresses the reasons for worsening of Turkish-Uzbekistani relations such as the bombings of Tashkent, Uzbek students in Turkey, Gülen Movement as well as the ideology of Pan-Turkism.

The reasons for worsening of the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations are not researched well enough in the literature. Expert interviews are used as a method of this study that had been conducted in the USA in summer 2012 during my stay as a visiting scholar at the Indiana University financially supported by the Council of Higher Education (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu) of Turkey. First Interviewee was Abdürrahim Polat who was the head of Birlik Movement at the beginning of 1990s. Second interviewee was ex member of Uzbekistani Parliament and Erk Party functionalist Jahangir Mamatov who were a close colleague of Muhammad Salih, the former Erk leader. I tried also to interview the prominent opposition leader Salih. However he did not reply my e-mails. Due to being famous compared to the other leaders there are different sources of Information about Salih. For instance, he has his own internet-site, where one can gather information about his activities.

THE NATURE OF THE BILATERAL TIES

The fact is that the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations were very close in the beginning of 1990s, when the mutual high level visits were intensified. Contrary to the thesis of this study Abdürrahim Polat thinks that Özal did not play an important part in developing and deepening firm ties to Uzbekistan. Polat stresses even that Uzbekistan had very different attitudes towards Turkey and Islamic world in the beginning of 1990s. Uzbekistani leaders thought that the relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan were just a simple visiting matter. As the authorities of Uzbekistan did not believe in their independence they had not taken seriously their countries relations to Turkey. Polat underlines further that Ankara and Tashkent were not ready to maintain their bilateral ties properly.⁴ Accord-

⁴ Interview with Abdürrahim Polat (former Birlik leader) in Bloomington/USA on 24.07.2012.

ing to Jahangir Mamatov the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations in early 1990s can be considered very close and friendly. In his point of view however both sides contributed to worsening of their diplomatic relations in the same grade. Mamatov expresses his thoughts about Turkish-Uzbekistani relations as follows: “Whereas Uzbekistan sent students to Turkish universities granted by the Turkish government, Turks founded schools and companies in Uzbekistan. Particularly, Turgut Özal and Süleyman Demirel went well with Islam Karimov during their presidencies, which did not succeed by their followers such as Ahmet Necdet Sezer in this vein. For instance, Demirel said Karimov by one of his visits in Tashkent that “your enemy is mine as well”. These words sounded very kind and pleasant to Karimov. I think as long as Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi AKP) remains in power, Turkey cannot develop and maintain good and friendly relations with Karimov regime. Considering AKP as an Islamist party, Karimov is not sympathetic to the Pan-Turkic ideas as well, which is also responsible for the tense relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan. One can say that if Karimov nears Russia, he drifts apart from Turkey automatically. Although Russia maintains very close and friendly ties with Turkey, it fears that Ankara and Tashkent can go the same path. With other words Russian elites think that if Turkey and Tashkent cooperate with each other, Russia would be bypassed. In my point of view the focus of Turkish policy towards Central Asia on Azerbaijan in the 1990s was a big and deathful mistake. If Turkey had considered Uzbekistan as a strategic partner and as a key country for her Central Asia policy in that time, we would have seen nowadays a different panorama of Turkish-Uzbekistani relations.”⁵

As it will be indicated below, Mamatov thinks that the bombings of February 1999 enormously influenced the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations in a negative manner. He expresses his thoughts about the Turkish-Uzbekistani ties as follows: “Turkey should pursue an

⁵ Interview with Jahangir Mamatov (former MP's in Uzbekistani Parliament) in Washington D.C. /USA on 9.08.2012.

Uzbekistan policy, which is not directed primarily at Karimov regime but at Uzbekistani people. Turks should follow a public policy that aimed at creation of a good image of their country in Uzbekistan. Nowadays the majority of Uzbeks does not like Turks and Turkey very much. In 1990s some insincere corrupt men from Turkey came to Uzbekistan in order to make business, who enormously damaged the image of Turks. If we add the negative campaign conducted by the Uzbekistani government against ordinary Turkish businessmen in recent years to this, the puzzle will be completed. Due to the allegation of supporting some small religious sects and distributing audio cassettes with religious contents the situation of Turkish businessmen worsened further in recent years. One should not forget however that all these occurred under the AKP government. Beside that the Uzbek women, who go to Turkey in order to work as baby sitter, are influenced also by religious sects as well.”⁶

KARIMOV REGIME

Islam Karimov⁷ was elected to be president of Uzbekistan on December 29, 1991 as the candidate of Peoples Party of Uzbekistan (former Communist Party of Uzbekistan), by which he gained 86 per cent of the valid votes. On the other hand Salih got only 12.7 per cent

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Karimov was born in 1938 in Samarkand/Uzbekistan, who is considered to be just as a simple technocrat and an apolitic man. For a long time he worked as a bureaucrat by state planning committee (Gosplan). Then he served as finance minister in 1986. It is important to stress in this context that Karimov was never a party bureaucrat (aparatschik) and has never belonged to the inner circle of communist nomenclatura (the higher party officials of the Soviet Union). By not wearing any party post or a position of party secretary before 1986 he had no experience in being a member of central committee of the communist party and did not participate in any party congress till 1986. Consequently it was very surprising that he was appointed as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in June 1989 following Nishanov's dismissal. His appointment to the head of commission of Kashkaderya vilajets in December 1986 however was an

of the valid votes. Karimov pursued a Turcophone policy in his election campaign in order to beat his rival Salih, who was in favour of a Pan-Turkic policy. As Dilip Hiro stresses in his book Karimov regime did not allow political heavy-weight Polat to participate in presidential election against Karimov. Contrary to the Birlik leader's candidacy the regime emphatically supported that of Salih's.⁸ In the early time of his reign Karimov was very friendly towards his opponents such as Salih and Polat. As Karimov would like to join his country in international institutions he made efforts to show himself from his best side as a democrat. As Birlik and Erk supported Turkestan assembly held on March 7, 1992 in Tashkent, Karimov opposed the idea of commonwealth of Turkestan, although he was for a commonwealth of Turkestan in cultural sense.⁹ Graham Fuller indicates that Karimov is not in favour of a supranational institution in Central Asia such as commonwealth of "Turkestan"¹⁰ or

important turning point in his political career. Between June 1989 and August 1991 Karimov was very merciful to the groups who brought him from Karshi to Tashkent as a compromise in the political power struggle, in which he had to share the power with his partner and old friend Sukrulla Mirsaidov. Donald Carlisle believes that Mirsaidov and his clique called Karimov to Tashkent, who as a strong prime minister concentrated the power and the important state ministries on his hands. When Karimov became president in March 1990, Mirsaidov served as his closest man. However Karimov and Mirsaidov had to go their own ways after a short period of time. Especially after the August 1991 coup d'Etat in Moscow Karimov strengthened his power further. In fact, Karimov came to power as a strong man after his election to Uzbekistan's president at the end of 1991 (D. Carlisle, *Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbours*, Y. Ro'i (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, Frank Cass, London 1995, pp. 80–81). For the posts held by Karimov in the Soviet era and for his authoritarian leading style see, J. Critchlow, *Nationalism and Islamic Resurgence in Uzbekistan*, in: H. Malik (ed.), *Central Asia. Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1994, pp. 238–240.

⁸ D. Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad, The Changing Face of Central Asia*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1994, p. 177.

⁹ Hiro, op.cit., p. 178.

¹⁰ Turkestan is an old terminus that refers not only to the modern words "Central Asia" which consist of the five former Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

“Turan”.¹¹ He prefers rather independent nation states in the region. Fuller thinks that only anti-communist and nationalist leaders would act against Karimov regime regarding regional alliances in form of a federation or confederation.¹²

Karimov regime has pursued a policy of repression against the national democratic opposition since 1992 that gave the way free for putting the members of political parties in prison. Among the opposition leaders, who were sentenced to various prison-terms one can meet the people such as Polatzhon Okhunov, Otanazar Oripov, Inomzhon Tursunov, Nosir Zokir and as well as Salavat Umurzakov. For instance, Okhunov was arrested blaming for hooliganism in June 1992 and sentenced to 18 months prison-term. Although he had to be released from jail in 1993, they extended his prison-term to three years with an allegation of having drug and trying to escape from prison. According to Adülmannob Polat at least 20 opposition politicians were jailed till the end of 1994.¹³ It should be noticed however that there were also lost politicians such as Abdullo Utayev, the leader of the Islamic Revival Party of Uzbekistan, Abdulvali Qari Ashuroglu Mirzayev and Abidcan Qari Nazarov. Last

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. In literature we distinguish between West-Turkestan (Russian) and East-Turkestan (Chinese) as well. This terminus was used also by the Russians as they conquered the Central Asia in Tsarist era at the end of 19th century. As they realised that the use of this terminus- it signalized the unity of the territory of the Central Asia – was very dangerous for their aims, it disappeared gradually from the Russian literature.

¹¹ Originally the word “Turan” means Turks that is used by the Iranian people that refers in an extended sense to the all areas where Turks and Turkic people live. But in a narrow sense it is used for the Turkic countries in Euro-Asian space such as Turkey and Central Asian Turkic states. On the other hand in 19th century Turanism (Turancılık) developed itself as a political ideology. Its orientation was directed at uniting all Turkic people in a single Turk state.

¹² G. Fuller, *Central Asia, The New Geopolitics*, RAND Corporation, R-4219-USDP, 1992, pp. 13–14.

¹³ For other political figures jailed and sentenced to the various prison-terms see detailed A. Polat, *Political Prisoners in Uzbekistan: Five Pardoned, Eight on Trial*, “Central Asia Monitor” 1994, No.6, pp. 31–32.

mentioned two people were leading figure of Mujaddidija movement.¹⁴ Nazarov was a student of Rahmettullo Allame and he served as an imam (religious head of a mosque) of Tahtabay mosque in Tashkent until his disappearance in 1998.¹⁵ Under these circumstances one could not speak about a national- democratic opposition already in 1995, in which it could be noticed only a coordination centre for democratic opposition led by Shukrollo Mirsaidov, who challenged Karimov until 1998. Thereafter because of repression and attacks by the regime (beaten up in the street and bombing his car) he had to be persuaded by the fact that he had no success in his political activities against Karimov. Consequently he was forced to give up his organisation. In sum, leading opposition figures went either in exile or jailed for various prison-terms by the end of 1990s. As indicated below the bombings on February 16, 1999 gave Karimov regime an opportunity for dispersing and eliminating democratic and Islamic opposition totally.¹⁶

As the Karimov regime does not allow the national-democratic opposition to participate in elections, Uzbekistani democracy can be considered as a pseudo-democracy. That means instead of the real opposition Karimov let establish pseudo-parties such as Vatan Terakkiyatı. Due to the weakness of the opposition the Uzbekistani regime can be labelled with terms such as “illiberal democracy”, “hybrid regimes” and “weak

¹⁴ New Islamic scholars led by Muhammad Rustamov Hindustani that is not involved in politics and that challenged the widespread Hanafi mazhab's (theological-juridical school) understanding was emerged in the end of the 1970s in the Soviet time and they were called Mujaddids, which meant “reformers” or “innovators.” Actually, this symbolizes the challenge to the current Hanafi understanding of Islam. Mujaddidiyya scholars emphasized that it was necessary to reinterpret Islam and rebuild the Muslim society in Central Asia, especially, re-Islamize the society and relinquish from secular government, and the purification of the beliefs of Muslims from superstitions; for instance, going to the tombs of saints must be prohibited. These groups especially wanted to ban the pre-Islamic habits, what supported by Mufti Ziyavuddin Babahanov (See F. Türk, *Radical Islamic Parties and Movements in Uzbekistan 1990–2012*, “Reality of Politics, Estimates-Comments-Forecasts” 2013, No. 4, pp. 277–281).

¹⁵ For speeches of Mirzayev see detailed F. Allen, M. Jahangir, *Uzbek Islamic Debates Texts, Translations and Commentary*, Dunwoody Press, Springfield 2006, pp. 95–220.

¹⁶ M. Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, Facts On File Inc., New York 2004, pp. 124–125.

state” as well. The Karimov regime can be evaluated rather as a hybrid regime, according to which democratic and authoritarian institutions have to cooperate with each other. Although there are democratic institutions in this type of regime, the state is unwilling to set mechanism enabling people’s participation in the political process, the right to express thoughts and as well as the participation of the people in the decision-making process.¹⁷ As a consequence of these characteristics of the Uzbekistani regime, Tashkent has been blamed steadily for abuses of human rights records, which was especially the case after the Andijan events in May 2005.

OPPOSITION LEADERS

Uzbekistani government was worried that Uzbek opposition leaders such as Abdürrahim Polat and Muhammad Salih could influence Uzbek students in Turkey regarding in an anti-regime manner who were enjoyed the status of asylum by the Turkish government. Further, Uzbek authorities blamed Turkey for sheltering Polat and Salih.¹⁸ Thus Karimov considered the residing of these leaders in Turkey as a great security threat for his political future. Therefore Karimov recalled all Uzbek citizens studying in Turkish universities (2.000 students) in order to protect them from fundamentalist Islamic organisation in 1997. It did not matter however, whether they got their degree. Tashkent was absolutely furious at having recruited of Uzbek students through Islamic groups/sects that had a big impact on the political and societal life during the Refahyol administration under the prime minister Necmettin Erbakan in the period of 1996 and 1997. In sum Karimov believed firmly that Turkey did not take care for the security of the Central Asian students at all.¹⁹

¹⁷ H. Alkan, *Orta Asya Cumhuriyetlerinde Siyasal Hayat ve Kurumlar*, USAK Yayınları, Ankara, 2011, pp. 5–14.

¹⁸ Balcı, *op.cit.*, pp. 80–81.

¹⁹ E. Berberoğlu, *Öbür Türkler Büyük Oyunun Milliyetçi Süvarileri*, Doğan Kitapçılık, İstanbul, 1999, pp. 122–123.

Because of Salih, an arch enemy of Tashkent, the relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan were very tense in the second half of 1990s. Karimov said to Turkish statesmen that Salih has to be treated like a terrorist. He draw even a parallel between Salih and Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdish Worker's Party (Kurdish acronym PKK). On the other hand Özal requested Karimov by his visit in Tashkent in 1993 for releasing Salih from jail. That means through the mediation of Özal, Salih got his freedom and was invited to Turkey by him. As Salih arrived in Turkey, Özal has died already on April 17, 1993.²⁰ Following Özal's death Karimov visited Ankara on June 21, 1994 in order to request abandoning Salih from Turkey. Consequently Ankara said Salih politely that he has to leave Turkey. So he went to Germany via Cyprus in April 1998. Meanwhile in *Trud*, a Russian newspaper, appeared an article on Salih's connections with some Turkish institutions as well as on his intention to train some Uzbek students with weapons against Karimov regime in Turkey. According to *Trud* after their training these young men were sent by Salih via Chechnya to Uzbekistan in order to let them operate within the republic of Uzbekistan. Afterwards Salih confirmed this news in an interview conducted by the *Radio Azatliq*.²¹ Salih believe however that Turkey did not support him emphatically, for which Karimov should be merciful to the Turkish government. For Salih another important point in this context is that Karimov is an anti-Turkish politician and pursued an unfriendly foreign policy towards Turkey. According to *Erk* leader Turkey treats Karimov very well and carefully, that cannot be accorded with Karimov's behaviour towards Ankara.²²

Because of supporting Polat and Salih, Karimov regime prohibited the activities of the Foundation for Turkic World Studies (*Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı TDAV*) in Uzbekistan. For instance, the periodicals of *Birlik Party* were printed in the publishing house of this foundation. As a result of these circumstances the TDAV deployed its main activities to the other Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.²³

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 123–124.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

²² *Ibidem*, p.170.

²³ Balcı, *op.cit.*, p. 268.

According to Polat, especially Salih and his followers have had a huge impact on the worsening of bilateral ties between Turkey and Uzbekistan. Polat thinks that his own party did not contribute to worsen the bilateral relations between Ankara and Tashkent. Regarding the worsening of Turkish-Uzbekistani relations through the activities of the Erk,

Polat expresses his thoughts as follows: "Salih ordered that twelve young men should be brought to Turkey and planned to use these men against Karimov after training them in military camps in Turkey in order to assassinate him, that made Karimov of course very angrily. Salih did all things obviously without of any secrecy. As a result of these circumstances near İstanbul trained men were arrested in the Turkish-Georgian border on their way to Tashkent. Even Salih gave evidence in an Azatliq interview that he had founded a secret organisation.²⁴ On the other hand ex- Erk member Mamatov also thinks that Birlik did not contribute to worsening of bilateral ties between Turkey and Uzbekistan. The first reason for this was that Karimov did not consider Birlik Party as a real threat to his regime. Second reason indicates that Polat was not ready for cooperating with Tahir Yoldashev, the leader of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). As Polat met Yoldashev in Turkey he would have said to him that IMU were in touch with Taliban and therefore he was not ready to cooperate with Yoldashev. As a result of this it is very hard to say that Polat contributed to worsening the bilateral ties between two countries.²⁵

As Salih stated, in a speech on the Radio Azatlık that he founded a secret organisation for overthrowing Karimov regime. So Karimov decided to recall the Uzbek students from Turkey. On the other hand Mamatov believes that it was a big mistake by the Uzbek opposition leaders such as Polat and Salih to seek asylum in Turkey. So they gave Karimov an opportunity to withdraw the Uzbekistani students from Turkey. According to Mamatov Uzbek opposition leaders definitely played an important role in worsening Turkish-Uzbekistani relations. Even the participation of six to seven Turks in the conference organised by Salih in Prague in June 2012 did not remain unnoticed by Karimov regime and

²⁴ Interview with Polat on 24.07.2012.

²⁵ Interview with Jahangir Mamatov on 9.08.2012.

maybe gave an impulse for further worsening of the diplomatic relations between both states.²⁶

MUHAMMAD SALIH

This section deals primarily with Muhammad Salih's (the former leader of banned Erk Party) views on Turkish Central Asia Policy as well as on the integration of the Turkic world. Salih expressed his thoughts about the integration of Turkic states in a newspaper interview as indicated below: "After the breakup of Soviet Union there was an opportunity for integrating Turkic world (Türk dünyası)²⁷ that we could not succeed in achieving it. The councils of the Turkic world however has been organised every year as an effective toll of a broader cooperation between Turkey and Central Asian states. If we always take care of the interest of the influential external powers such as the USA and Russia in this respect we could not realise our own projects. We, the proponents of the integration of the Turkic states, insisted from very beginning on the creation of a common language between Turkey and Central Asian states, which was and is very essential for the creation of a such union. This common language should be a practical wide-spoken language, through which the whole Turkic world (approximately 250 million people) can communicate with each other very easily. This language should be oriented by the Anatolian Turks spoken Oghuz dialect. That is to say, in Istanbul spoken Turkish".²⁸

From Salih's point of view Turkey expelled the Uzbek opposition leaders from Turkey to Europe in order to continue good relations with

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ This term refers actually to the space that stretches from Adriatic Sea to the Great Wall of China which was very popular in the Turkish politics at the beginning of 1990s. On the other hand however, it is used for describing the Turkey and Central Asian states in a narrow sense. In this study Turkish world is understood in the sense of Central Asia and Turkey.

²⁸ *Kerimov halk düşmanı ve bir diktatördür*, <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/2011/11/30/muhammed-salih-kerimov-halk-dusmani-ve-bir-diktatordur.html>, (accessed: 02.06.2013).

Uzbekistani regime. However, Karimov ignored this positive step taken by Ankara and showed cold shoulder to Turkey within the international organisations. As the Turkey signed the declaration of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe owing to the Andijan massacre by the Uzbek government, Karimov was very angry on Turkey. Salih thinks that Turkey's democratic tradition also plays an important role in Karimov's attitude towards Turks in a negative manner. Despite the fact that Karimov regime intensified its anti-Turkish campaign in recent years, Turkey's positive image spreads by means of internet and TV-channels throughout Uzbekistan.²⁹

Salih expects from Turkey that Ankara is ought to pursue an active Central Asia policy that should be centred on the Turkish foreign policy. If the Turkish government would have concentrated its foreign policy on Central Asia with the epicentre Uzbekistan rather than Middle East, we would have seen very different picture regarding the cooperation of Turkic states. Eventually Karimov regime did not exist in this case in Uzbekistan. However Turkey follows a Central Asia policy that directed at not interfering in the internal affairs of Central Asian states. Salih points out further that Turkey should not be neutral towards the events taking place in Uzbekistan. For instance, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish prime minister, says every time that Turkey cannot deal with a dictator regarding Syrian President Besharal-Assad. We will hear the same words for Karimov who acts against the political will of his own citizens. In my point of view Karimov should be thankful for Turkish governments. Because of not damaging good relations with Uzbekistan, Ankara was not willing to support for Uzbek opposition further. Within this context even the contrary was the case. For instance some prime ministers of Turkey forced us to leave Turkey, when Karimov visited Turkey in last decades.³⁰ Salih welcomes, that Turkey should behave as a big brother in Central Asia and in Uzbekistan as well. Only in this case Turkic world can revive in the world and build a Turkic bloc. Believing in establishing of the union of Turkic states Salih points out that such a union should not base on a one flag but

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem.

on a one currency, economic power, custom union and conformity of scripts as well.³¹

Salih does not approve of the Turkish Central Asia policy. According to him Turkey has neither Uzbekistan nor Central Asia policy. In fact, Turkish foreign ministry could not predict the breakup of Soviet Union and hence, it was not able to develop a well-planned foreign policy towards Central Asia. In addition to this for Salih it is a quite questionable issue that Turkey did not rethink of her Central Asia policy until the present day, although it has passed a long time. In sum, Salih believe that Turkey should pursue a balanced policy towards Central Asia.³²

ABDURRAHİM POLAT

Birlik Party maintained always good relations with Turkey. For instance, Abdürrahim Polat and Polat Ahunov visited Ahat Andican, the head of Association for Cultural and Social Aid of Turkestani People (Türkistanlılar Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği), between August 2, and August 9, 1991 in Istanbul, where they met also ex-prime minister Süleyman Demirel. This association provided Birlik leaders with technical equipment in order to create a free press in Uzbekistan.³³ Later on Polat arrived in 1992 in Turkey and met Mesut Yılmaz, the head of Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi) in August 25 and Alparslan Türkeş, the leader of Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi MHP) in August 30 in Ankara. There after Polat participated in the council of Turkic world between May 21 and 23 May in Antalya and started to live in exile in Turkey.³⁴ However he indicated that he had no contact any more with above mentioned Turkish politicians except Ahat Andican. For Birlik

³¹ Muhammed Salih'e göre Özal'ın ölüm sebebi, <http://www.haberaktuel.com/muhammed-salihe-gore-ozalin-olum-sebebi-haberi-135194.html>, (accessed: 06.02.2013).

³² Türkiye'nin Orta Asya Politikası Yok, <http://www.turksam.org/tr/a420.html>, (accessed: 02.06.2013).

³³ H. Açıkgöz, *Abdürrahim Polat Azatlıkta*, Kuşak Ofset Bakı, İstanbul 1995.

³⁴ Açıkgöz, *Ibidem*, pp. 58–59.

leader these meetings were considered to be as a moral support.³⁵ Stressing the absence of Turkey's Central Asia policy Polat expresses his opinion on this subject as follows: "Özal and Demirel were enormously interested in Central Asian issues in 1990s, what was however not the case by the Demirel's successor namely Ahmet Necdet Sezer. External powers in Central Asia such as the USA and Russia cannot prevent the cooperation and close ties between Turkey and Central Asian states as it has been argued in comments of foreign experts. If we consider the Turkey's Central Asia policy under the AKP-administration, we can see that AKP pursue a pseudo-foreign policy towards Central Asia in order to satisfy Turkish nationalist at home. Actually, I think that AKP has no influential foreign policy towards Central Asia or Turkic world."³⁶

In Polat's point of view expelling Uzbek opposition leaders from Turkey, the withdrawal of Uzbekistani students from Turkey, the closure of Turkish schools and the recent operations against the Turkish businessmen could not consider as a declared war against Turkey. In his opinion gradually worsening of Turkish-Uzbekistani ties can be described as follows: "Because of training of twelve Uzbekistani young men by the Turkish officers that were brought to Turkey by Salih, the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations came in a stalemate situation. In the wake of these circumstances Karimov started to consider Turkey as his arch-enemy that had somehow an impact on the operations against Turkish businessmen launched by the Uzbekistani police since 2011. On the other hand the relations between two countries were never firm and deep as they were considered to be."³⁷

Polat believes that one cannot say that supranational institutions such as the summits of leaders of Turkish speaking countries, council of Wise-men (Aksakallar Kurulu) were sufficient enough to satisfy the needs of these countries. In his opinion supranational relations between Turkey and Central Asian states could be developed as indicated below: "The leaders of Turkic world show no willingness to cooperate with each other

³⁵ Interview with Abdürrahim Polat (former leader of Birlik) in Bloomington/USA on 25.07.2012.

³⁶ Interview with Polat on 24.07.2012.

³⁷ Ibidem.

within the framework of supranational institutions. At least Uzbekistan interested in developing cooperation between Turkish speaking countries. For instance, the Central Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan try to achieve their own aims. I believe firmly that Turkey and the Central Asian countries should come together in order to realise joint-projects. We should work on our ties step by step. That means we tighten them gradually, which is however not an easy task. As I said before there were a disorder and unconsciousness considering the relations between Turkey and Central Asian states. We have similar language, religion and culture, which can be seen as our main assets”.³⁸

TURKEY’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS UZBEK OPPOSITION LEADERS

Above mentioned Uzbek opposition leaders have maintained always good relations with Ankara prior to their exile in Turkey. For instance, Polat, Salih and Mamatov involved in Council of Turkic World organised by Turkey. Mamatov believes that Salih installed good relations with leading Turkish politicians such as Alparslan Türkeş in that time. Türkeş addressed even a letter to Karimov with the request of forgiving Salih and working together with him in order to revive Uzbekistan. With other words, Turkish state was supporting Salih in that time. For instance, Demirel ordered Turkish Intelligence Agency (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı) to support Salih. As Karimov got informed about this fact, he ordered the withdrawal of the Uzbekistani ambassador from Ankara.³⁹

Mamatov describes Turkey’s attitude towards Uzbek opposition leaders as indicated below: “Turkey had close ties to the Uzbek opposition. Especially we had good relations with MHP that supported Salih and Polat financially and logistically. In addition to MHP, Motherland Party had always maintained close ties to Uzbek opposition leaders through media-

³⁸ Interview with Polat on 25.07.2012.

³⁹ Interview with Jahangir Mamatov on 9.08.2012.

tion of Ahat Andican. Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) was another political institution, with which Uzbek opposition had firm connections as well. Polat met even Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as he was Mayor of Istanbul. So Erdoğan let reserve for Polat a living house in Istanbul at the Mayoralty's expense. Actually, the Welfare Party supported either leaders. Polat's contact men for his connection with the Turkish state were Turan Yazgan and Nevzat Yalçıntaş".⁴⁰

THE BOMBINGS OF TASHKENT

The bombings and clashes of February 16, 1999 in Tashkent were a milestone in the worsening of bilateral relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan. It was reported that these bombings were suicide attacks against Karimov. Although it was not obvious who were behind these events, the bombings were connected with Islamist organisations. It is important to keep in mind that Karimov regime blamed Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) led by Tahir Yoldashev and Hizbut-Tahrir al Islami as well as other Islamic organisations for bombings.⁴¹ On the other hand Salih was also blamed for cooperating with Islamists such as Yoldashev. In fact, Salih had political connections with Yoldashev and he admitted that Selimhan Yanadarbiev- he signed an agreement between Taliban and Chechen fighters- was his close friend. Moreover, Karimov regime made Turkey and Tajikistan responsible for supporting radical Islamists that worsened bilateral relations between those countries.⁴² On the other hand according to Rustam Mametkulov, Salih and Yoldashev met on July 2, 1997 in Istanbul where they agreed on overthrowing Karimov regime. According to this agreement after a successful coup de Etat in Tashkent

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ For the radical Islamic movements of Uzbekistan such as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizbut-Tahrir al Islami see F. Türk, *Radical Islamic Parties and Movements in Uzbekistan 1990–2012*, pp. 273–298.

⁴² A. Polat, *The Islamic Revival in Uzbekistan: A Threat to Stability*, R. Sagdeev, S. Eisenhower (eds.), *Islam and Central Asia. An Enduring Legacy or An Evolving Threat?*, Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Washington D.C., 2000, pp. 48–49.

the power would have taken over by Salih and he would have become the president of Uzbekistan. However, there are indications that Abdullah Gül mediated between Salih and Yoldashev during the Refah-Yol government.⁴³

In Polat's point of view the bombings of Tashkent worsened the Turkish-Uzbek relations inevitably. Especially Yoldashev's meetings with other Uzbekistani opposition groups in Turkey were not welcomed by Karimov. Polat expresses his opinion on the visit of Yoldashev in Turkey as indicated below: "Yoldashev came to Turkey and met ex-prime minister Necmettin Erbakan in 1997. Even Erbakan donated 100 thousand US-Dollars to Yoldashev.⁴⁴ Because of their wealthy supporters such as Saudi Arabia this financial aid by Erbakan was rather in a symbolic manner for IMU. Yoldashev's visit to Turkey meant for Uzbekistan that Turkey hosted the enemies of Karimov".⁴⁵

UZBEK STUDENTS IN TURKEY

Turkey launched a grant program for foreign students from Central Asian countries in 1992 known as "grand student project" (Büyük Öğrenci Projesi) that was extended to other countries in upcoming years. Within the framework of this program Uzbekistan sent 1.638 students to Turkish universities- except military and vocational schools- to Turkey in 1992. This figure makes 11 per cent of all students coming from Turkic world which decreased to 4 per cent in 1998. Despite the fact that Salih and Polat were expelled from Turkey by the Turkish government, Uzbekistan ordered to recall its students from Turkey. So the figures of Uzbekistani

⁴³ Suikastte Hoca Adı, <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=-89359>, (accessed: 06.06.2013).

⁴⁴ Turkish press in formedal so that Erbakan gave Tahir Yoldash 100 tausend US-Dollar in order to support his jihad against the Karimov regime. See detailed Erbakan'a Ağır suçlama <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1999/07/04/siyaset/siy01.html>, (accessed: 06.06.2013).

⁴⁵ Interview with Polat on July 24th 2012.

students were at lowest level in its history in 1999. On the other hand, Balci underlines the fact that Turkey sent more students to those countries that were unwilling to cooperate with her.⁴⁶

Polat considers the “grand student project” as a very essential and useful tool for the future of entire Turkic world. He thinks however, the efforts made by Salih for influencing Uzbek students gave Karimov the chance to withdraw them from Turkey that resulted in disappearing of this opportunity for Uzbekistani students.⁴⁷ Mamatov stresses that Salih had tried to influence Uzbek students and he intended send them to Uzbekistan in an anti-regime manner after training them in military camps in Turkey. Provided the fact that this event was true, Mamatov believes that he also gave some efforts for influencing Uzbek students in Turkey. He expresses his opinion on this issue as follows: “Salih brought 20–30 young men from Uzbekistan to Turkey in order to give them military training in a camp by Şile near Istanbul. Some of them were kept by the police as they were ready for leaving Uzbekistan. The rest of them were arrested by the Georgian border guards as they wanted to travel to Chechnya. For this purpose Salih cooperated with Turkish authorities. When we were living in exile in Turkey we (Salih and I) contacted with Uzbek students and met them in cities such as Bursa and İzmir in order to influence them in an anti Karimov manner. We chatted about political issues of Uzbekistan with each other and discussed how to free our country from Karimov’s dictatorship. However, I have to admit that it was not an easy task to influence students. On the other hand among them there were some secret agents of Karimov regime, through whom Karimov informed at the right time what was went on in these meetings. The reason why we did not succeed in organizing students against Karimov regime was the inability of Uzbek opposition leaders to focus on the real issues within this framework. They were interested in making show rather than in realizing serious plans. It should be mentioned in this context that Enver Altaylı recorded the participants of the military training on a video-cassette and he eventually sent it to Kari-

⁴⁶ Balci, *op.cit.*, pp. 100–104.

⁴⁷ Interview with Polat on 24.07.2012.

mov in order to get advantages for himself and for his brother Taha as well, who were running business in Uzbekistan in that time”⁴⁸

Mamatov expressed his opinion on the issue of Uzbek student during the interview as follows: “I propose that all Uzbek students should study in Turkey. In the Soviet era Uzbek youth studied in Moscow and in some other Russian big cities, that paved the way to revive a Russian friendly generation. If young Uzbeks study in Turkey, it is more likely that they will return home with pro-Turkic attitudes what will make possible a closer cooperation between our countries. However, it should be indicated that Turkey has to pursue a foreign policy aimed at national rather than religious community. The opposite would be the wrong path. For instance, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan went to Kyrgyzstan and he did not even stress the importance and necessity of Uzbek-Kyrgyz brotherhood. He could have said at least that they were brothers and do not differ with each other in a great extent. In sum, I think that for AKP-government Arabic world is more important than Turkic one”⁴⁹

FETHULLAH GÜLEN MOVEMENT AND TURKISH SCHOOLS

Fethullah Gülen Movement played also an important role in the worsening of the Turkish-Uzbekistani relations. In the wake of the early disturbances considering the Turkish-Uzbekistani ties in 1994 Tashkent expelled some Turkish teachers from Uzbekistan. Due to the Islamic mentality of the founders of these schools these institutions had always been suspect to Uzbekistani regime. In Tashkent’s point of view these schools were propagating for Islamic values and so they radicalises the young people.⁵⁰ Salih points out that in Uzbekistani prisons there are nowadays approximately more than hundred young men who were alleged to be belonged to Gülen Movement or to be the member of Nurcu move-

⁴⁸ Interview with Jahangir Mamatov on 9.08.2012.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Balcı, *op.cit.*, pp. 196–197.

ment. Indeed, they were not Islamist at all whose only guilt was going to Turkish schools.⁵¹

After assassination attempts against Karimov, Uzbek authorities closed ten Turkish schools financed by Turkish businessmen in Uzbekistan in the school term of 1999–2000. Moreover, the teachers working for these schools were deported immediately from Uzbekistan to Turkey. Apart from this Uzbek government did not allow the pupils to finish their schools. Even for the absolvents of these schools was impossible to let them enrol in Uzbekistani universities. The pressure made by the Uzbekistani authorities however, were not limited only to Turkish schools. They operated against Ufuk groups which had close ties to the Gülen Movement. İbrahim Karadayı, the manager of this company, was arrested by the Uzbek police without any proofs for his guiltiness. Furthermore, Uzbek regime defended these anti-democratic and lawless practises by ordering to write articles in newspapers and by making TV-programmes in order to justify these operations against Turkish institutions and schools. That means Uzbek government launched a smear campaign against Turks and Turkey.⁵²

Since 2010 Karimov administration has been operating against the Turkish businessmen in Uzbekistan closing down their companies excusing them of tax-embezzling, holding religious books and pamphlets etc. This situation was described by Vahit Güneş, the owner of Turkuaz company, with the following words: “I lived in a hell in Uzbekistan”. The loss of his company has to be accounted to 50 million US-dollars. Fikret Güneş, Vahit Güneş, Cüneyt Kahküllü, Mehmet Memoğlu, Asım Kayan, Levent Karabayır and Numan Akın were Turkish investors in Uzbekistan whose companies were confiscated by the Uzbek government in 2010 and 2011.⁵³ In fact, the Uzbek government has already set a signal for revocation of the licenses of 21 Turkish companies in 2000.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Kerimov halk düşmanı ve bir diktatördür.

⁵² Ibidem, p.126.

⁵³ For the histories of these business men see detailed; <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/20404576.asp>, (accessed: 09.06.2013).

⁵⁴ <http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/18999.asp>, (accessed: 09.06.2013).

These unjustified acts of Uzbekistan were not criticised by the AKP-government that caused anger by the disadvantaged businessmen. Turkish press remained also silent in this important issue. According to Salur during these operations launched by the Uzbekistan's security forces 54 Turkish businessmen were jailed. The National Channel (Ulusal Kanal) and the Newspaper Brightness (Aydınlık Gazetesi) accused these businessmen to be belonged to the Gülen Movement. After these occasions Ulfat Kadirov, the Uzbekistani ambassador in Ankara, visiting governorship of Eskişehir invited the Turkish businessmen to his country, which was to be considered as a very ridicule statement.⁵⁵

PAN-TURKISM

Proposing the idea of commonwealth of Turkestan or Turkic states Polat believes that such a project would be realised by the elites of the region. He indicates further that the problems preventing Turkic countries from uniting in a state-like structure should be solved with use of force. He expresses his thoughts on this issue as indicated below: "In my point of view it does not matter whether people are proponents for the idea of commonwealth of Turkestan. Crucial things can be realised by the elites of a state and society. They decide for setting priorities of the ideas in order to form public opinion. For instance, vital projects in the USA were realised by the well-educated elites that make up approximately five per cent of the total population. If Uzbek elites do not give proper and reliable information about Turkey, how do people build their opinion about Turks and Turkey. Hence, if the elites of a country discuss the problems in the front of their countrymen, so they could hear important issues regarding state life and they should be aware of it. As I mentioned before the commonwealth of Turkestan must be founded definitely. Even the unwilling countries for this idea should be persuaded by force. For instance, if Tajikistan would create a union with Iran, Uzbekistan should prevent this

⁵⁵ <http://www.zaman.com.tr/en-cok-okunanlar/ozbekis-tanin-ankara-buyulelcisi-kadirov-skisehirde/2021540.html>, (accessed: 09.06.2013).

country from doing so by using force or even through occupation of this country [...] I think that elites of Central Asia nowadays are still under Russian influence and due to this fact there are no room for ethnic nationalism and even for Pan-Turkism in their mind”.⁵⁶

On the other hand Mamatov also thinks that the commonwealth of Turkestan or Turkic states can be established through the efforts of intellectuals and state authorities in future. According to him the Turks are a nation that would be rather ruled by a strong leader. If the leaders such as Karimov and Nazarbaev decide to establish a commonwealth of Turkestan, it would be then very easy to realising this project. Because of the fragmentation of the Arab people by belonging to various religious sects (Sunnism-Shia- Vahhabism) they could not be united in a framework of a single Arabic confederation which does not exist by the Turks in this vein. For Turks supra national identity “being Turk” is more important than the religious identity.⁵⁷ Mamatov points out that, it does not matter how the union of Turkic people would be called. Moreover, he expresses his opinion on the Pan-Turkic union as follows: “We can name such a union of Turkic people as “Commonwealth of Turkestan” Union of Turanian States” or “Union of Central Asian States”. It is important to keep in mind that such a union have to be created definitely. I believe that intellectuals of Turkestan consider this project as a positive undertaking. In fact, the Central Asian states have no other option than to create such a union. In case of not creating of a commonwealth of Turkestan these states have to settle their problems with their powerful neighbours such as Russia and China bilaterally. Eventually, ethnic tensions could be emerged among Central Asian states”.⁵⁸

Mamatov believes that the creation of a union between Central Asian states in the similar structures like that of the European Union can serve as a platform of conflict resolution for the Turkic people of Central Asia. Hence, it would contribute to promote regional security and peace.

⁵⁶ Interview with Polat on 25.07.2012.

⁵⁷ Interview with Jahangir Mamatov on 9.08.2012.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

Whereas Russia and Iran consider Pan-Turanism as a dangerous ideology for their own national security, the USA and the EU would welcome such a union in order to counter balance Russia and China in the Central Asian region.⁵⁹ On the other hand Polat points out that Russia, China, Iran, the USA and the European Union are opposed to the Pan-Turanian ideology. That means they consider it as a threat to their own national interest and security. Moreover, Polat expresses his thoughts on Pan-Turanism as follows: “Because of their own benefits above mentioned countries find Pan-Turanism as an ideology and the eventual union of the Turkic states as a dangerous phenomenon and formation. As these states founded empires in the past and governed other nations over a long period of time, they do not want that another power would be emerged in this region as a challenger to their hegemony. However, I believe that the union of Turkic world would be come into existence in the long term. Hence, it is a very natural thing that the states and nations with common cultural, linguistics and religious roots would be united. One of the reasons for the inability of uniting Turkic world was the counter-plans of our enemies that are obliged to prevent the realisation of this project. For instance, in the era of the Soviet Union there was an association for young scientists. As a matter of fact that it was very difficult to travel abroad in that time, one had to go to an another country only through such an organisation. Like-minded institutions have organised excursions with a group of 10 to 15 people to the various destinations in the world such as to European countries and Egypt. If an association has organized annually ten trips to Egypt in a year, they conducted only one travel to Turkey. That means the Russians wished that the Turkic people of the Soviet Union would not get any contact with the Turks of Turkey or elsewhere.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Interview with Polat on 26.07.2012.

CONCLUSION

As the Uzbekistani opposition leaders underline that the relations between Ankara and Tashkent in the era of Özal and Demirel can be considered as friendly, who could manage the fears of Uzbekistani president Karimov properly. If it is taken into consideration that Karimov faces big problems with Islamist opposition at home, it is clear that he is not willing to maintain good relations with moderate Islamist AKP-government of Turkey. Considering the nature of bilateral ties between two countries in the middle of 1990s it can be said that due to the support of Uzbek opposition leaders by Turkey Karimov got excited about the intentions of Turkish foreign policy towards his own country.

Turkish politician supported the Pan-Turkic leaders such as Polat and Salih, who lived in exile in Turkey till the end of 1990s, which was however unacceptable for Karimov regime. Especially, Salih maintained good relations with Turkish influential politicians such as Alparslan Türkeş, the leader of MHP. On the other hand nowadays Salih supported by the AKP-government that gives him an opportunity to organize conferences in Turkey or to allow Turkish citizens in participating of Uzbekistan conference in Prague, which is not welcomed by the Uzbekistani government. In sum, we can evaluate the contacts of Turkish authorities very friendly towards the Uzbek opposition leaders. On the other hand as Mamatov and Polat stress that the Uzbek opposition tried to influence the Uzbek students in Turkey, which did not remain unnoticed by the Karimov's agents. These activities of the Uzbek opposition may be interpreted in an anti-regime manner by the Tashkent that contributed also to worsening of the bilateral ties between two countries.

Moreover, due to the above mentioned factors such as the opposition leaders, the bombings of Tashkent, Uzbek students in Turkey, Gülen Movement and as well as Pan-Turkism the Turkish-Uzbekistani bilateral ties worsened irreparable throughout the 1990's. Particularly, the moral and financial support of Yoldashev by the Erbakan and his meeting with Salih in Istanbul regarding to launch a coup d'état against Karimov were considered as an act of enemy by the Uzbekistani authorities. As a result of these circumstances Karimov ordered that young Uzbeks studying at the

Turkish universities should be withdrawn from Turkey, which was evaluated very negative for the development of the Turkish-Uzbek relations. Thereafter Karimov expelled the teachers of the Turkish schools from Uzbekistan in order to curb the imagined threat by Nurchus in his country. The Uzbek operations however remained not limited to the Turkish schools. After shutting down all of these schools at the beginning of 2000 the Karimov regime focused on the Turkish businessmen with the background of Gülen movement. So it is to say, Tashkent operated against Turkish businessmen with suspect allegations of various crimes in 2011 and let them put into prisons.

Another important issue in this context is the Pan-Turkism which was also connected with the opposition leaders. For instance, Gülen Movement was blamed for propagating Turkism and Pan-Turkism by the Uzbek government. Although Karimov was a proponent of the Pan-Turkic ideas at the beginning of 1990's, he moved away from this ideology as Turkey was in favour of it. Hence, under these circumstances one cannot speak about a Turkish-Uzbek friendship any more. Moreover, Karimov regime has also contributed to worsening of the Turkish-Uzbek relations that would not get on well with Turkey and other states in the region as well. Due to his authoritarian governing style he closed his country to the outside world. For instance Uzbekistani citizens have to apply for an exit visa from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan and Tashkent has annulled the scholarship program "Omid" for Uzbekistani students providing them to study in Western countries. As a consequence of the undemocratic nature of Karimov regime Tashkent has no good human rights records that have a big impact on the Uzbekistani-Turkish/Western relations.

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