

The East Turkistan Issue

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Abstract

The East Turkestan issue is one of the most significant ethnic, political, and human rights problems in contemporary Asia. This study examines the historical background of East Turkestan, the region's geopolitical and geostrategic importance, and the policies implemented by the People's Republic of China toward the Uyghur Turks. The paper traces the historical development of East Turkestan from ancient Turkic states to the modern era and analyzes the impact of Chinese rule on the region. Particular attention is given to assimilation policies, demographic changes, cultural restrictions, and allegations of human rights violations. Furthermore, the study evaluates the responses of the international community, international organizations, and human rights institutions to developments in the region. The findings suggest that the East Turkestan issue cannot be understood solely as a security concern but must also be addressed within the framework of minority rights, cultural identity, and human rights. Sustainable stability in the region depends on policies that promote integration, cultural preservation, and respect for fundamental freedoms rather than assimilation and coercion.

Keywords: East Turkestan, Uyghur Turks, China, Xinjiang, Human Rights, Assimilation Policies, Geopolitics, Ethnic Identity.

Introduction

East Turkestan is the center where many Turkic states were founded throughout history. The Huns are at the forefront of these. It was T'ou-man (Teoman) (220 BC) who established the first Hunnic state by achieving unity among the Huns. The center of the Huns was in the region of Ötüken, which the Turks considered a sacred land, between the Orkhon-Selenga rivers and immediately to the west of these rivers. After T'ou-man, his son Mo-tun (Meté) ruled for 35 years, expanding the borders of his state from Siberia in the north to the Himalayas in the south, and from the Pacific Ocean in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west (1).

There were many khanates in the region stretching from East Turkestan to Fergana in the west. Meté Khan gained control over these khanates, uniting them and expanding the state's borders over a vast area. As a result, the state grew stronger, expanding its borders almost across Asia and uniting nearly all the peoples of the region under one banner. However, these

small states under Meté Khan's rule maintained a degree of autonomy. This was not favorable for China. Previously, China could easily trade its high-income products, such as silk, through these small states, but now it had to contend with a large empire like the Hun Empire. In this context, China launched a major effort to destroy the Hun Empire. It chose to find a new ally as the best way. For the first time, large armies were assembled, and propaganda campaigns were conducted among the smaller states in the region. Thus, between 133 and 119 BC, China launched an all-out war against the Huns. In this context, China wanted to give gifts to these small states in Turkestan and establish kinship relations with them. Having succeeded in this, China turned a significant number of these states into its friends and allies. So much so that the khans of some states in Western Turkestan applied to the Chinese emperor to separate from the Huns and come under Chinese rule. This divide-and-rule policy that China applied against the Huns became effective over time and played an

important role in the collapse of the Hun Empire (2).

The Great Hun Empire A.D. 216 ' d a from its collapse later East In Turkestan The Kangkil (Kao-ch), Göktürk, Türgiŝ, Karluk, and Uygur states were established in succession . (840 AD) in the year İslam His religion first aspect acceptance Turkish State Karahanids It was founded in East Turkestan. During the Karakhanid period (840–1212), Turks began converting to Islam at a rapid pace. After the Karakhanids, other Turkic states were established in East Turkestan, including the Chagatai, Timurid, Seidiye Khanate, Kashgariyya State, and the East Turkestan Republic (Chinese Manchu Empire) by occupation much East in Turkestan Turks independently they lived (3).

In 1755, Chinese Manchu invaders, taking advantage of the power struggles among the Jungars, attacked the lands of Turkestan almost a millennium after their heavy defeat at the Battle of Talas in 751, and in 1757 they occupied all of East Turkestan. With the beginning of the Chinese occupation, peace and security disappeared from the region. After the occupation, China imposed incredible pressure on the local population. A regime of fear was established, and people began to be subjected to cruelty and torture. The Turkic people of East Turkestan, resisting oppression and enslavement, revolted against the Chinese invaders from time to time. The liberation movement launched throughout the country quickly bore fruit, and under the leadership of Yakup Han, the Kashgari State (1865–1878) was established in 1865. (The Ottomans , England ...) And Russia by official recognition despite This The state 's lifespan was short, and East Turkestan, reoccupied by the Chinese-Manchu State in 1876, was renamed in 1884, a name in Chinese meaning 'new colony', 'new border

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, ' newly acquired territory ' coming Sincan with the name To the Chinese Empire connected (4).

The 20th century was a century of resistance against Han rule and systematic and continuous colonialism for the Uyghurs. After the 1920s, the Chinese ruler Yang Zangxi recognized Beijing's authority , achieving almost complete independence . One politics watch it . In 1931 uprisings It started . Eastern Islam The Turkic Republic was declared on November 22, 1933. But it was dissolved shortly after as a result of the intense efforts of the Russians and the Chinese (5). Within the framework of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance signed on August 14, 1945, Russia agreed to East Turkestan remaining under Chinese rule. In 1949, Stalin stated that the US had a presence in the region and the neighboring Chinese Muslim region . big One Islam d state ku rac a ğı with the claim, communist The Chinese China supported the occupation of East Turkestan (6). As a result , in 1955, China made the occupied territory one of the five autonomous regions of the People's Republic of China, under the name of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. came (7).

The upheavals following the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) transformed almost every aspect of Uyghur society. Both movements emanated from Beijing and were primarily led by Han Chinese, but their effects were deeply felt by the Uyghurs; they now faced a double burden of assimilation. Like all citizens of the People's Republic of China, they were forced to reshape their socio-economic relations in line with Mao's utopian visions. At the same time, they faced an overtly assimilationist agenda from the authorities in Xinjiang, which aimed to solve the nationality problem by forcing Uyghurs to conform to Chinese cultural norms. This campaign

developed alongside the Religious Reform Campaign, which initiated the process of completely eliminating Uyghur religious institutions and practices. The Religious Reform was followed by the Great Leap Forward, which not only led to economic disaster and famine in many cases, but also shattered Uyghur social structures (8).

In the early 1950s, six different alphabets were introduced to the Uyghur people. These included three different writing systems and changes in the names and order of letters, as well as spelling changes. While we see similar changes among other language groups in Xinjiang and South China (the Yi people adopted the Latin alphabet in 1956 but re-adopted the old Yi writing system with some standardization in 1980), the Uyghur experience is extraordinary. The frequent changes affected not only the intellectual community but also an entire generation of Uyghurs who were literate when these changes occurred, and a similar group among their ethnic brethren, the Uzbeks, Tatars and Tajiks, still use the same Uyghur writing system (9).

Following the Barin uprising in April 1990 and the Yining uprising in Ghulja province in February 1997, the Chinese government significantly intensified its repressive policies. To such an extent that China, rejecting the use of terms like "East Turkestan" and "Chinese Turkestan" because they imply external historical ties that could call into question Chinese sovereignty, further extended this stance, adopting a negative attitude towards states that have established official relations with Taiwan, to also target states using the term "East Turkestan." (10). On the other hand, the emergence of five independent Central Asian states following the collapse of the USSR in 1991 brought to the forefront discussions in many capitals, especially Beijing, about whether the ongoing process of fragmentation would spread to East

Turkestan, which is ethnically and culturally a part of Turkestan. The collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged Uyghur, Tibetan, and Mongol nationalists in China to pursue independence (11). The Uyghur diaspora living in the Central Asian Republics, a large part of whom came from East Turkestan, numbered approximately 250,000 according to Chinese data from 2003. Most were encouraged by the Soviet administration to work against the Chinese administration in East Turkestan during the 1969 Sino-Russian conflict. The winds of democratization that began in the Soviet Union towards the end of the 1980s also affected the Uyghurs in the Central Asian Republics, and they formed organizations in their respective republics aiming for the independence of East Turkestan (12).

The fight against extremist religious movements and terrorism, which are the most important problems of the Central Asian states after independence, was also supported by Beijing. The most important factor behind this support is the 3000 km border shared by the Central Asian states and China's Uyghur region, and the potential threat this border poses to China (13). During this period, Chinese officials insisted that they would not fall into the same situation as the Soviet Union. To this end, Beijing took a series of measures to prevent East Turkestan from seceding from China and emerging as the sixth Central Asian Republic. Beijing primarily tried to prevent instability that could spread from Central Asia to the region by increasing border security. Following the visits of the Head of the Xinjiang Regional Government, Timur Damawat, to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1990 and 1991, a five-year agreement was signed between China and Kazakhstan on cooperation in security and economy, as well as reducing customs tariffs applied to imports and exports. The issue of border security was an important topic in the first meetings held in 1992

between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, and China. agenda article It has happened. Four year along continue e d en negotiations with the establishment of the Shanghai Five in April 1996, which forms the basis of the SCO has been concluded (14).

The struggle, which had taken a political turn since the 1980s, took on a new face in 1990; it transformed into an epic uprising, typical of peoples living under overt or covert subjugation. Bombings began and multiplied – around 200 between 1987 and 1990 – continued in 1993, 1994, and 1997, and even included bombings in Beijing in 1997. Generally, clashes took place in the streets, and the demonstrations spiraled out of control. These uprisings were naturally suppressed in a horrific manner. Popular movements, drug trafficking, and gang wars resulted in arrests, murders, and even executions that continued into the late 20th century (15).

China has long pursued a two-pronged policy in this region to increase its ethnic Chinese population and establish demographic dominance. On the one hand, it has intensified its presence in the region ... One Chinese population migration while realizing especially d e 200 3 from the year since within the framework of the "redirecting surplus labor to other regions" policy, the Uyghur Turks in this area (especially the young population) are being moved to inland regions of China with the aim of assimilating them into the general population. This assimilation policy implemented by China involves moving young Uyghurs to inland regions of China with promises of employment and assimilating them into the general Chinese population. The most striking example of these assimilation policies is the removal of Uyghur girls aged 16-25 from East Turkestan to inland regions of China under the guise of better education and job opportunities. Since June 1, 2006, this

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policy has resulted in the relocation of 240,000 Uyghur girls to inland regions of China. China aims to move 1 million Uyghur girls to other regions of China under this program. It is reported (16). The protests that took place in East Turkestan on July 5, 2009, and the intervention of the Chinese Security forces in these protests were met with outrage all over the world and once again drew the attention of the international public to the region (17). Indeed, news from the region after the Urumqi incidents stated that the Chinese administration further increased its oppression of the Uyghurs, arresting thousands of people and subjecting hundreds to extrajudicial executions (18).

In conclusion, since China codes the East Turkestan issue as a security problem, it seems unlikely that its policies towards the Uyghur Turks will change in the near future. We are faced with a dilemma: the fear that 9 million Uyghurs could achieve independence in a country with a population of 1.4 billion is utterly meaningless. On the other hand, it would be equally naive to think that the Uyghur Turks could "voluntarily" accept the policies of oppression and assimilation. Therefore, the solution to the problem lies not in assimilation policies, but in integration policies that meet the demands of the Uyghur Turks (19).

Importance of the Region

Northwest China corresponds to Xinjiang (East Turkestan), an ancient country with a long history of political autonomy. Here, historically, many regions have replaced one another . number state available It has happened . Furthermore , This and a This soils on The Turkic ethnicity belonging to the Islamic faith is the Uyghurs. In the mentioned regions, the Chinese maintain control through direct force and overt colonization, exploitation of the local population, and suppression of all attempts

to defend religious and ethnic autonomy (20) .

Halford Mackinder's *Heartland* theory, a power that controls the Eurasian mainland, especially its central Central Asia, controls the whole world (21). East Turkestan, being an inseparable part of Central Asia from a geopolitical point of view, is a region that China does not want to relinquish. In addition, East Turkestan has rich natural gas and oil reserves. Western experts believe that the region's wealth, with 8.2 billion tons of crude oil and 2.5 million cubic meters of natural gas, is as great as that of Saudi Arabia. Half of China's coal reserves are also located in East Turkestan (22) .

East Turkestan is like a main gateway to the world. Just listing its neighboring countries is enough to give an idea. Its neighbors are Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia, and Nepal within it. In a way, it is the furthest, northwesternmost corner of China. It is the starting point of ancient trade caravan routes. Today, incredibly modern centers have been established there, and it functions as the brain of energy-based trade (23). Therefore, Beijing has begun to increase its trade with Central Asian countries through East Turkestan. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, China's trade with Central Asian countries has shown great growth. China's Only 2000 in the year Middle Asia with their countries he/she performed Exports were \$1.051 billion while imports were \$767 million (24).

China's Assimilationist and Genocidal Policies

East Turkestan was separated from the Turkestan region by the Chinese invasions that began in 1759. Its name was changed to the New Region (Xinjiang - 1884). The people of East Turkestan, never giving up the struggle, frequently revolted. In 1931,

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the largest popular uprising occurred, and on November 12, 1933, the East Turkestan Republic was declared. However, it became ineffective because the Prime Minister and ministers were handed over to China by Khoja Niyaz, who was elected President for life. China generally demonstrated its oppression of the Turkic people by executing their leaders. With the Communist Party's rise to power in 1949, China quickly transformed into a state that instilled fear throughout the world. Its initial policy of violence and oppression has continued uninterrupted to this day. The insensitive and ruthless attitude of communist ideology towards humanity and all human phenomena, its materialistic approach that mechanizes interpersonal relationships, and its rejection of a compassionate and just governance model have resulted in a cruel and tyrannical system of rule. Although some Western circles believe that China is democratizing due to liberal reforms in the economy, the Communist Chinese government has no intention of abandoning its dictatorial regime. What is happening on Chinese soil is proof of this, and both the Chinese and East Turkestan peoples are the most important witnesses to these brutal practices. The communist regime resorted to the physical extermination of Muslims who refused to assimilate. The number of Muslims killed was horrific. Between 1949 and 1952, 2,800,000; between 1952 and 1957, 3,509,000; between 1958 and 1960, 6,700,000; and between 1961 and 1965, 13,300,000 people were either killed by the Chinese army or died as a result of the famine caused by the regime.

The surviving portion of the population was subjected to severe oppression and torture. East Turkestan's long duration in exile living merhum leader leather Is a Yusuf Alptekin , in his books "The East Turkestan Cause" and " The Forgotten Homeland : East Turkestan , " published in Turkey,

describes these oppressions and tortures in detail. According to these books, the oppression inflicted on the people of East Turkestan is no different from that inflicted by the Serbs on Muslim Bosniaks in Bosnia or on the Albanian majority in Kosovo. The "punishment" methods of the Chinese courts in the country are also extremely cruel and brutal. These include burying people alive, leaving a person who has been beaten to death naked in the snow, and cutting a person in two by tying their legs to two separate oxen. has been implemented (25).

China's assimilation policy towards the Uyghur Turks of East Turkistan began in the 1960s. It had begun. First aspect Uyghurs 1 00 0 year use they came Arabic The traditional alphabet, based on the Chinese Pinyin script, was replaced with the Latin alphabet. From the 1950s onwards, the population transfer policy led to a significant increase in the Chinese population brought to East Turkestan, while the position of Uyghur Turks in state institutions gradually weakened. The successive nuclear tests conducted in East Turkestan from the 1960s onwards can also be considered another link in the chain of the assimilation policy. Between 1964 and 1996, the Chinese conducted a total of 46 nuclear tests in East Turkestan, resulting in 190,000 deaths. By the 1980s, the Chinese government, through a planned birth policy, was simultaneously targeting the reproduction and proliferation of Uyghur Turks while intensely transferring populations to the region. The number of Uyghur children forcibly aborted and eliminated under this planned birth policy can be estimated in the millions. In China's interior regions, Chinese people had a one-child policy, but when they came to East Turkestan, they were exempt from this policy. Today, the demographic balance of East Turkestan has been completely

disrupted, and Uyghur Turks have become a minority in many cities. (26)

In addition to these efforts to assimilate Uyghur identity, a colonization policy is being implemented, similar to the one Moscow pursued towards Central Asia during the Soviet era, aiming to end the demographic dominance of Uyghurs by settling Chinese populations in the region. Another important point, as frequently noted by regional experts, is that the economic development experienced by China in its process of capitalist development is also seen in East Turkestan, but Uyghurs have not benefited at all from this change. All major businesses in the region belong to the Chinese, and the Uyghurs, the vast majority of whom make a living from farming and market trading, live on the margins of society. In this respect, we witness that the process of capitalist development has increased socio-economic stratification in the region on an ethnic basis (27).

The major terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, brought about a new strategic arrangement that would alter many balances in the world. The US launched a global fight against international terrorism targeting its country. However, some countries intended to exploit this struggle and use it for their own interests. China was at the forefront of these. Seeking to portray the US response to terrorism as a "war against Muslims," China issued a message in October 2001. In summary, the message stated that "China also wants to see the East ... " in Turkestan Islamist to terrorists opposite West world with partnership It was said that " what they wanted to do " was a clear distortion by China. Because the people of East Turkistan are waging a just struggle to protect their spiritual values, to preserve their culture and customs, to freely practice their religion and use their language. And this struggle has been carried out for many years on an extremely democratic platform

thanks to the common sense of the East Turkistan leaders. However, as in any society, there may be individuals or groups prone to violence among the people of East Turkistan. But this does not negate the fact that East Turkistan is waging a just struggle. The real terrorist force in the region, as we have examined throughout this book, is the Chinese administration, which is carrying out a long-term genocide against the oppressed Muslims in East Turkistan (28).

The East Turkestan Issue in the International Community

The international community does not deny that states should take certain measures when real and imminent situations arise that threaten their national security. Even in these cases, states cannot disregard the right not to be tortured. However, in China, the concept of "maintaining national stability" has been interpreted to include almost any activity that appears to threaten the sovereign state order. This means that in China, people have been arbitrarily imprisoned, tortured, and detained for exchanging information or expressing opinions within the framework of the rule of law and through peaceful means. They were killed.

Having joined the UN in 1971, China is theoretically a party to the fundamental human rights principles outlined in the UN Charter. China has also adopted the general principle, accepted by UN members, that recognizing persistent human rights violations as an international issue rather than an internal judicial matter. Nevertheless, China has fundamentally... UN Person rights their contracts He did not sign it. China's UN Person The decision to join the Rights Commission demonstrates its acceptance of international standards of human rights. This was an important sign that it was ready to do so (29). Furthermore, although there have been some improvements in China's

stance on human rights as a result of the deepening economic relations between the Chinese government and EU countries, and the human rights debates and discussions on laws between the parties, the legitimate demands of the people in East Turkestan, which the Chinese government refers to as the "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," are being harshly suppressed, and therefore the dimensions of national antagonisms and conflicts are growing day by day (30). The events of July 5, 2009, are the most striking example of this. Because the events that took place in Urumqi on the night of July 5 quickly spread to other cities in the East Turkestan Autonomous Region, the events in the region once again called on the international community and The events have drawn the attention of the Turkish public to the region. The Chinese official news agency Xinhua announced that 184 people had died and more than 1,000 were injured. However, both international sources and the Uyghur diaspora have stated that the number of dead and injured is much higher. For example, the spokesperson of the World Uyghur Congress. The BBC gave interview local from sources what they took According to the information , the death toll is over 600 explained (31).

International NGOs also reacted to the events in a short time. Amnesty International called for an immediate independent and impartial investigation into reports that 140 people were killed in Urumqi on July 5, 2009, as a result of the violence of the protest demonstrations. Roseann Rife, Deputy Director of Amnesty International Asia-Pacific, said, "Chinese authorities must be held accountable for those who died and were detained. Those detained for peacefully expressing their views or exercising their freedom of association and assembly must be released immediately. A fair and full investigation

must be launched, with fair courts appointed in accordance with international standards, without resorting to the death penalty” (32). Islam conference organization (OIC) d e East In Turkestan lived after the events movement It is in the past . General Secretary Ekmelettin Ihsanoglu 's instructions Information was obtained by contacting the foreign ministers of some member countries at the headquarters in Jeddah in shopping It has been found. Ihsanoglu, what he did in the explanation East He expressed deep concern about the worsening situation in Turkestan, particularly the numerous casualties and property damage among civilians. He also expressed his profound sorrow that the Uyghurs are forced to live in a climate of fear . China He called on the government to restore peace and tranquility so that Uyghurs and all civilians in East Turkestan can return to their normal lives (33). The events of July 5th have once again demonstrated that developments in East Turkestan significantly impact China's national and international standing. The Beijing administration must resolve this issue as soon as possible within the framework of minority and human rights.

CONCLUSION

China, the world's fourth largest country by area, with a population of 1.3 billion (approximately one-sixth of the world's population), a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a vast market, and a geopolitical location, along with the expectation of becoming the world's largest nuclear power by 2050, has led many observers to predict that it will become a superpower in the 21st century. However, the problems stemming from China's demographic expansion into the region, its inability to resolve border issues with India, its internal problems in East Turkestan, Taiwan, and Tibet, its economy's dependence on foreign investment, unemployment and social security issues,

the obsolescence of its armed forces technology, environmental problems, disparities in living standards between regions, income inequality, and its increasingly reliant energy needs on imports will be the most significant obstacles to China becoming a superpower. Although official Chinese discourse from Mao to the present day has avoided the concept of a "global power," arguing instead that it should be a "regional power," the main factor behind this is the awareness among Chinese leaders that they are still not at the level of major powers in economic and military terms. Any political, economic, and cultural decision Beijing makes regarding East Turkestan will affect all minorities within China. Consequently, stability and development in East Turkestan are among the most important factors affecting the development and stability of the entire country. In this context, it is predictable that China will not soften its policy towards the Uyghurs, and may even increase this oppression in the future. It is possible.

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