ABSTRACT: Eastern Turkistan is a residential area which is situated on the Turkistan hinterland defined as “homeland” of Turks; which has spiritual importance for both Republic of Turkey and other Central Asian Turkish Republics. As, “the autonomy” given to the Turks of Eastern Turkistan by Chinese Government is pretended, debate on Eastern Turkistan have become a persistent matter requiring international interest. In this context, it is necessary to follow rebellious attempts going on for centuries in China don’t source from a simple obstinacy. It is doubtless beyond question how much strong the national will of just 30-40 million populations against the population exceeding one billion is. Currently, the passive boycott attempts against Chinese state and the rebellious attempts carried out together with other counter groups but resulted in failure, and sometimes the diplomatic actions carried on abroad aiming to support the democratic-nationalist strive of Turks of Eastern Turkistan. Lastly, in 14 October 2004, the government-in-exile of Eastern Turkistan Republic defined itself as the continuation of Eastern Turkistan Republics founded in 1933 and 1944 in the meeting arranged in the Capital Hill Auditorium of the USA Statehouse.

Keywords: Eastern Turkestan, China, Russia, Ottoman Empire, nationalism, Turkish rebels, democratic-nationalist strive.

By the reason of “expansionist policies” of Chinese Empire in Eastern Turkistan which is known as the homeland of Turks, the conflict has occurred between Turks and Chinese. This conflict has continued for centuries by acquiring dimension with the opposite attacks of both sides. The first suppressions against the native Turkish population in the region began in the second half of 17th century. In the “relative peace atmosphere” observed before so called date, Ming Dynasty employing balance policy toward Turkish-Chinese elements and looking for support from both societies affected greatly. (CENGİZ- GAYRETULLAH, 1982:7) On the other hand, Manchu tribe who overthrew Ming Dynasty and governed China till 1911, changed negatively the balance policies which the state employed against the Muslim elements of community till that date. Actually Manchu Dynasty believed that Islam was a serious threat for the empire contrary to Ming Dynasty. Based on this new policy, the regions such as Kansu and Yunnan where Muslims are majority were occupied by Chinese Empire. (CENGİZ-GAYRETULLAH: 27-28)

In 1755, China sending a strong army unit to Eastern Turkistan succeeded to get hold of the great zone of the Turkish land. However, Eastern Turkistan was completely occupied by China in 1878. Manchu Dynasty changed the name of Eastern Turkistan as “Sincan (Xinjiang)” in this period. Until this date, the Eastern Turkistanis who were Muslim-Conservative were seized with nationalist movement after the occupation. The Muslim Chinese people in Kansu, began the first serious boycott against China in 1781 and forced China to give the region cultural rights. In 1763, according to the report which Çaı Hui, the commander of occupation forces, presented to Chinese Emperor, thousands of Muslim-Turks lost their lives in the rebellious acts for three years after the occupation. (BUGRÇA, 1952: 21) At the same time being, eight thousand families were exiled from their homelands.

In 1763, a strong rebellion act in the leadership of Hamidullah Bey burst out and above ten thousand Turks lost their lives in the collisions. Another rebellious act breaking out in the leadership of a famous rioter, Cihangir Hodja from Eastern Turkistan went on until 1828, as a conclusion, Kasgar, Yarkent, Hoten, and Aksu cities gained independence. However, in these regions, independence went on only for seven months and Chinese army of forty thousand soldiers dis-
persed the Cihangir Hodja forces and overthrew the government again. According to the historical records, Cihangir Hodja was killed in 1847 after Emperor Tao-Huang approved the execution resolution. (KURBAN, 1995:10-50)

After the execution of Cihangir Hodja, Turkish nationalism in Eastern Turkistan quickened. The public giving the title of “Hodja” to Muhammed Yusuf, the younger brother of Cihangir Hodja rebelled against China one more time. Muhammed Ali Madali, Hoken Khan, supporting the revolt in Eastern Turkistan, put Hakkuli Major-one of the leading commanders of his army-under Yusuf Hodja’s order. The rebelstrooping towards Kašgar in September, 1830, together with twenty Hokend soldiers near the Major, surrendered the Chinese army of occupation (BAYMIRZA, 1995:140).

After the victory he gained, Yusuf Hodja achieved the title of “Khan of Eastern Turkistan”. However, as the disturbance arising between Buhara and Hokend Khanates resulted in the fact that Hokend soldiers fell back to defend their countries, the Chinese government took the power of the region again. Yusuf Hodja falling back to Fergana lost his forces greatly. The death of Hoken Khan in 1847 caused desperation in Eastern Turkistan. The scrappy armed groups arranged in a great dread attempted to a desperate rebellion act of which the result is obvious together with the seven prominent leaders of the country. Katta Tora, the leader of the rebellion, was caught by Hoken Khan, but he was released four years later. (BUĞRA:22-23) Tora invaded Kašgar in 1852, but no result was obtained.

In the second half of 1850s, it is seen that nationalist Turkmens succeeded many times against Chinese troops. In the rebellion bursting out in 1857, the Major Hakkuli lost his life. The Afyon War, the Tayping rebellion becoming a current issue in the first years of 19th century caused China to be confused greatly. The boycott acts arising in about every region of China triggered nationalist Turkmens, too. In 1864, the nationalist Uygar Turks surrendered the army of occupation, but the rebellion was quenched without reaching any conclusion. In April, 1863, the nationalist Turkmens rebelled in the leadership of Raşidüddun in Küçar started again the revolt against China carried out in the leadership of Siddik Bey, Hacı Habibullah, Muhammed Ali, Ala Hudaykuloğlu, Davud Halife in other cities.

Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan

In the beginning of 1964, by the reason of personal disputes, status-royalty arguments, it couldn’t be ensured the national unity and cooperation between Turkish rebellious beys. In the same years, Eastern Turkistan was divided into five small countries. The men heading rebellious groups were the governors who didn’t have any experience at state affairs. These governors destroyed the power of the rebellious people greatly to prevent eastern Turkistan to unite under one flag because of both conflict between themselves and by leaking information to Chinese government. However, Yakup Bey who took refuge in Eastern Turkistan by running away from West Turkistan and was supposed to be born in 1820 gained on end success in the strive he attempted with Chinese people. Yakup Bey became the natural leader of the Turkmens in the region. (GÖMEÇ, 2007) However, the religious authorities in Eastern Turkistan saw him as “foreigner” and in broke down his rebellion act by forcing him to run away from the country. Despite the negative situations he confronted, Yakup Bey became like the symbol of the rebellion by liberating Kašgar from the Chinese sovereignty and put across his hegemony in Yarkent.

The fact that West Turkistan was exposed to Russia served Yakup Bey in a good sense because thousand West Turkmen nationalists defeated entered Yakup Bey’s service, right after running away from the Russian army. (KURBAN, 2004: 45-47) Yakup Bey, succeeding to be the leader of Eastern Turkistan with this power, declared that Hokend state transformed to a cooperative dynasty. Announcing himself as “Atalik Gazi Yakup Han BaDevlet (Mesut Hükmüdar-Fortunate Dynasty)”, Yakup Bey became the emperor of Kašgar and Yarkent. Breaking into the city of Hoten during bloody skirmish in 1866, Yakup Bey made Turfan and Ürumiçi dependent on him and established Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan. Yakup Bey who aims for the whole world to recognize his state sent a committee under the presidency of Yakup Kadi to the Ottoman Empire in 1870. By this act he declared that he obeyed the sultan of the period, Abdulaziz.

After Ottoman Empire helped Yakup Bey, Egypt and other various Islamic countries began to recognize this new country. Abdulaziz sent a military technical team under the presidency of Colonel Kazım Pasa to Eastern Turkistan. The
military experts of Ottoman Empire succeeded to create a Turkmen army of eight thousand soldiers in short period. Abdulaziz went on sending arms and money even if it is restricted after the constitution of the army. Trying to get on well with European countries, Yakup Bey sent Yakup Kadi, the man he trusted on most, as an ambassador to Petersburg and London respectively (TARİH MATERYALLERİ- XXV, 1988:417-419) Russian and English states declared that they recognized Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan and gave guns as a present to this new country. However, Russia was troubled with both the fact that Yakup Bey became stronger and the sovereignty of China in the region. Therefore, after a secret agreement with China, it landed troops to the border of Eastern Turkistan. In the year of 1875, China made soldiers shipment of 82 armed forces for the occupation Eastern Turkistan. Yakup Bey, losing the north side of the country, demanded peace from the Chinese state. In 24 January, 1877, England declared that it can reconcile in- between Eastern Turkistan and China. In 28 May and 26 July, 1877, English peacemakers brought close together Kuo-Ta Cen, London Consul of China and Yakup Khan twice wasn’t be able to reach a successful result. The death of Yakup Khan in 29 May, 1877, caused Turkish unity in the region to be dissolved and leaded Islamic Country of Eastern Turkistan to be demolished. (ATIF, 1999: 16-68)

The Period of Governors in Eastern Turkistan

Breaking into Kasgar in December, 1877, Chinese army occupied the whole country in 16th of May, 1878. When Eastern Turkistan was recognized as a Chinese principality, “the period of Governors” remembered with oppression in the country began. (HURGOKBAYRAK.COM) However, this time, China didn’t touch Islamic values of the country as different from the past, and it tried to block the national movements by abusing Islam and religious authorities. By the way because of the revolutions arising in China in 1911, Manchu Dynasty ended, and Chinese Republic was established. Turks rebelled in the leadership of Timur Khalif in 1912 defeated Şah Maksud, the governor of Kumul. Chinese state, afraid of expanding of the rebellion, placed a puppet religious authority. The alleged Islamic Council set out attempted to make people of Eastern Turkistan passive and convince them to depend on the state. These alleged religious authorities exploiting the principle of Islamic religion, “Obey the state and orders” against the rebellious people reached their aims even if it is partial. This application going on until 1928 became reversed suddenly on the fact that a Chinese officer punished Turkish family who didn’t give their girls to him. (CENGIZ- GAYRETUL-LAH, 57)

In the spring of 1931, the rebellion in the leadership of Salih Dorga and Hodja Niyazi Hacı reached the success and Kumul gained its independence again. The independence of Kumul encouraged the Muslim folk in Kansu and all the Muslims were united under one flag. On 12th of November, 1933, under the presidency of Hodja Niyaz Haci, the President (BATUR, 2005), the Republic of Eastern Turkistan was established. The prime minister became the Sabit Da Molla known as an honest reverend. Worrying about the developments, the Chinese Colonial Governor run away and took refuge in China. The substitute governor called Şin-Si Şay had to accept the defeat as he wasn’t able to withstand the forces of Eastern Turkistan.

Russian Period in Eastern Turkistan

Thereon, China demanding help from Russia started a pincer movement from each two side toward Eastern Turkistan. In 1934, although Red Army’s troops were confronted with fierce resistance from place to place, it defeated the Muslim forces. The President Niyaz Hacı who accepted to negotiate with Chinese and Russian delegations was consented to form a collective government with Say, the colonial governor. In fact, Russia hadn’t had helped China. On the contrary, by exploiting China as an abutment, Russia captured Eastern Turkistan constituting an important part of the country partially. In 1935, Russia established political police organization in the country. However, Eastern Turkistan National Army rebelled against the Red Army Troops of twelve thousand soldiers in April, 1937. During rebellion, eighty thousand ones of the resisters standing between Russian and Chinese forces lost their lives. After the rebellion breaking out in April, 1937, was quenched, Hoca Niyaz was arrested, and then he was killed such as Şerif Han Töre and other prominent leaders from eastern Turkistan. In the same year, four revolts in Barköl and the revolts breaking out in Altay in Febraturay, 1940 and June, 1941 were quenched in a bloody way.
The occupation which went on for ten years was resulted in the fact that the underground treasure of Eastern Turkistan was pirated. When Russia was withdrawn from the region because of its internal disturbance, Chinese army of fifty thousand soldiers broke into Eastern Turkistan again. The rebellion starting in the leadership of Osman Batur in the region of Altay was quenched by China without having any difficulty. On the other hand, the rebellion breaking out in September, 1944, reached success in the northwest of Eastern Turkistan and the Republic of Eastern Turkistan was established again. (EMET; 2000)

Ali Han Töre became the President of the country. Losing emplacement against the revolts spreading in the other regions of the country, Chinese Army withdrew. However, at this juncture, Russia steeped in again and it is declared cease fire between nationalist China and Eastern Turkistan Revolution State. According to the contract ensured in January, 1946, the Republic of Eastern Turkistan was disestablished and a collective state which China and revolutionists set out started to work. (BUĞRA: 55-61)

Meanwhile, the uneasiness of Russian invasion on Eastern Turkistan obliged Chinese people to get on well with Turks better. Drawing back from government, China accepted that a new government to be established could be constituted from nationalist Turks. In this new government established, Mesut Sabri Baykuzu became President, Mehmet Emin Buğra became the Minister of Public Works, Canım Han Haci became the Minister of Finance, İsa Yusuf Alptekin became the General Secretary. The fact that communists became stronger caused that the dreams of Turkmens transformed to a nightmare.

**The Rebellions in the Period of Communist China**

In July, 1949, the communist forces defeating nationalist China started to make military build-up to the border of Eastern Turkistan. Ma-Pu-Pang, the leader of Chinese Muslims defeated communist forces in the first collision, but he wasn’t able to prevent that the whole country became under the dominance of China. However, Turkmens didn’t approach accepting the option of socialism because socialist values were completely contrary to the conventional acceptances of Uighur Turks. As a matter of fact, the same developments were experienced in Eastern Turkistan, too. In the 7th congress realized in 1945 before obtaining the power, Mao declared that communist personnel would give the right of determining their own futures and self-direction to the different ethnic roots when they obtained the power. However, just as he obtained the power, by ignoring the promises he gave before, he explained, “Xinjiang had been an inseparable part of China for two thousand years, so it is nonsense to divide China to federal states. This demand means the enmity towards the history and socialism.”

As a matter of fact, the new government naming Islam illegal transformed mosques, muslim theological schools and mausoleum to cinema halls to make the propaganda of socialism and so the rebellions began again. The fact that most of Chinese governors, who forced the religious leaders to fire religious passages in arenas on their own, fell victim to assassination shows how much strong Islam is in Eastern Turkistan just like in other whole Turkish region.

In fact, the attitude the new government had towards was the manifestation of re-construction in the country because the only enemy the communist government was not Islam. The communist government who wanted to subject to a reform completely started a systematic oppression policy towards Confucianism and Buddhism as well. However, Islam, not as compliant as the other two religions, was stopped with oppression. In 1950, the fact that Islam was not mentioned in party resolutions abolishing the whole religious and permanent moral conviction system can be commented as the policy of having Muslims on their own side voluntarily, the policy of conquering the castle treacherously. With this aim, the works of Mao was published by being supported from verses of Koran and by being translated to Arabic and Uigur languages. These sentences in a magazine published in Beijing in 1958 have the features to explain the bases of the new policy:

“The Communist Party demands that all religious functionaries should go on keeping patriotism alive and they should have socialist conscious. We all should love socialist homeland and walk on the socialist path. According to this state, we want religious functionaries to support the China Republican Party and the Government and walk on the socialist path.” (LU: 281)

**Conclusion: From Today to the Future**

On the other hand, the nationalists from Eastern Turkistan began to strive against the commu-
nist regime they had never been able to put up with from the diplomatic way this time. As a result of this propaganda, the cultural resisters having the support of other Muslim elements began to express the demand of the fact that Muslim provinces should be separated from China by establishing an Islamic Dynasty. The rebellion chain after a conference was transformed to the armed rebellion by expanding quickly. (ALPTEKİN, 1989:1-142) On 20th of March, 1959, in the southwestern region of Eastern Turkistan, ten thousand rebellious people attacking a local jail under the presidency of four religious leaders destroyed the important control points of China for six days. The various rebellion attempts following this rebellion have been quenched in a very bloody way by communist government till today.

It is necessary to see the rebellion attempts going on for centuries in China don’t source from a simple obstinacy. It is doubtless beyond question how much strong the national will of just 30-40 million populations against the population exceeding one billion is. Currently, the passive boycott attempts against Chinese state and the rebellion attempts carried out together with other counter groups but resulted in failure, and sometimes the diplomatic actions carried on abroad aim to support the democratic-nationalist strive of Turks of Eastern Turkestan. Lastly, on 14th of October 2004, the government-in-exile of Eastern Turkistan Republic defined itself as the continuation of Eastern Turkistan Republics founded in 1933 and 1944 in the meeting arranged in the Capital Hill Auditorium of the USA Statehouse. Political scientists and Turcologists are looking forward to see the role of the Government-in-exile having the support of the USA who plans suppressing China economically and this public opinion of this country will play in Eastern Turkey’s resistance.

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