

East Turkestanis and the Limits of Ethnic Citizenship

Arienne Ekinici, PhD Candidate at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
ariennem@live.unc.edu

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Abstract

From 1952 onward waves of immigrants from Xinjiang became naturalized as Turkish citizens. The first fled over the Pamirs and arrived in Ankara via India, then settled in as “East Turkestani” refugees. While the majority slowly adjusted to live in the Anatolian hinterland, community leaders Mehmet Bughra and Isa Yusup Alptekin used their base in Istanbul to attempt to cultivate international political support for an independent East Turkestan state. Their political work directly undermined Taiwan’s claim to the Xinjiang as an integral part of the Republic of China, and thereby thrust the pair between Turkey and its NATO allies, particularly the US.

While outwardly supportive of Alptekin and Bughra’s anti-communist critique of the PRC and attempts to forge a recognized community out of Turks from their homeland, the Turkish state was ambivalent about the origins of these immigrants and any purported relation between geographic homeland and political community. All immigration papers categorize immigrants from Xinjiang as “Turks”, eligible for citizenship not as refugees, but as returnees. However, the state evidenced increasing unease concerning their state origins. Official immigration papers from the 1950s list immigrants as hailing from “Chinese Turkistan” or simply “Turkistan”, formerly of Chinese nationality. However, the wave of 200+ Xinjiang-born immigrants who arrived in Turkey via Afghanistan in the 1960s are identifiable as such only by the town in which they were born and the location of visa processing. This specific group of immigrants had capitalized on the establishment of PRC-Afghanistan bilateral relations in 1959 to claim they were Afghans ‘stuck’ on the wrong side of the border in 1949. They were allowed to relinquish claims to Chinese citizenship and emigrate to Afghanistan as Afghani nationals. However, a number found the Afghan state unsympathetic and petitioned the UNHCR for refugee status. By the time they arrived in Turkey they had already denied two state’s offers of political recognition as supra-ethnic nationals and were thus suspect potential citizens. On their immigration papers the Turkish state identifies them as tebaasiz, using an archaic Ottoman term referring to stateless subjects. Political claims to anything other than the Turkish state are thus erased in the papers that grant them citizenship.

In its incorporation of Xinjiang/East Turkestani immigrants, the Turkish state undermined the possibility of East Turkestan being anything other than a cultural identity. In the mid-90s, Turkey changed immigration laws, and Xinjiang-born migrants are no longer eligible for Turkish citizenship on the basis of ethnic heritage. This paper bridges China-centered scholarship on Xinjiang with archival material from the Turkish National Archives to extend knowledge about this group from Xinjiang into diaspora and create a more comprehensive narrative that takes Turkey’s stance towards ethnic politics into consideration. It is hoped that this research will also provide insight into contemporary debates over the [non]status of the estimated 10-50,000 recent, undocumented, Uyghur refugees in Kayseri and Istanbul.

Introduction

In January of 1952, 1,850 “East Turkestanis” disembarked in Ankara and were soon settled in Istanbul and Kayseri as “returning Turks.” Their sponsored migration occurred under a government scheme to resettle ethnic Turks from across the former Ottoman Empire in the Turkish Republic. Only one of their party, however, had ever been to Turkey, and none had immediate familial ties to the region. Instead, the East Turkestanis hailed from the ancient *Turkic* – not *Turkish* – heartland of Central Asia. Yet, they were received in Turkey as Turkish-speaking ethnic Turks.

This paper looks at successive waves of successful and unsuccessful East Turkestani and Uyghur migration to Turkey to inquire into the limits of ethnic, or ancestral, bases for citizenship in shifting geopolitical contexts. “Turkish-speaking ethnic Turks” wasn’t the only way East Turkestanis imagined themselves – or the only identity they emphasized in their bid to gain legal residence and political recognition in diaspora. When state borders solidified in the mid-20th Century, new nations did not always map perfectly onto populations within. How do groups with plausible affiliations with multiple states but undisputable claim to none craft political identities that lend them legitimacy as potential nationals? How do they navigate between claiming rights and retaining a unique identity, particularly if they hope for future political sovereignty? And what can the experiences of migrants granted ethnic-based citizenship reveal about the edges of citizenship and ethnicity in the adopted state?

As they moved into diaspora, the East Turkestani community experimented with numerous modes of affiliative belonging, which I define as claiming political inclusion on the basis of common core characteristics. One of the avenues through which they pursued affinitive belonging was through ethnic citizenship in Turkey. Ethnic or, more accurately, ancestral, citizenship allows a group to claim the right to political belonging via common ancestral heritage.¹ Ethnic heritage is just one of many citizenship regimes and, as this paper demonstrates, is inherently fragile and unstable.

Two great challenges face the model of ethnic citizenship open to communities with shared ancestral heritage. First, for diaspora populations who hope to return to their homeland, there is a fundamental contradiction and constant need to negotiate a balance between emphasis on common characteristics with the host country, and maintenance of a unique ethno-political identity in hopes of future sovereignty. This leads to an inevitable conflict between the host state and communities offered ancestral-based citizenship. This is especially true in states like Turkey in this particular period, where citizenship is characterized as *republican*, or highly public in nature. While East Turkestani elite viewed their Turkish citizenship as a temporary measure, the Turkish state preferred unequivocal allegiance from its newest citizens, and held an uneasy relationship with East Turkestani leaders who used the security provided by their Turkish

¹ The distinction between citizenship via ethnicity, ancestry and descent is not always clear. In Turkey, The Law on Settlement (Law 2510, June 14, 1934) states that individuals of “Turkish descent and culture” can be granted refugee status.

passports to advocate for East Turkestani independence domestically and abroad. Because these tensions are not easily resolved, affinitive citizenship on ancestral or other grounds, is proved to be inherently fragile and unstable, offering few permanent promises for nation and potential nationals alike.

Background

The East Turkestanis in question hailed from what is today the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China. Approximately 10% of them were sedentary Turks from *Altishahr*, or “six cities,” the ring of oasis towns around the Taklamakan desert, and would today be categorized as Uyghur. This included the two self-proclaimed leaders of the East Turkestani movement, Isa Yusuf Alptekin and Mehmet Emin Bughra². The other 90% of East Turkestani migrants to Turkey were predominately nomadic Kazak from the Dzhungarian basin, today located in northern Xinjiang and Eastern Kazakhstan. Xinjiang both north and south had long been a hub of interregional trade and political exchange, populations were not clearly contained within the borders

The two regions were annexed by the Qing Empire following a bloody campaign against the Mongolic Dzhungarians in 1755.³ *Altishahr*, which was then a protectorate of Dzhungaria, came under indirect and oft-contested Qing rule, though the region retained close ties to Kashmir (later affiliated with British India) and other Central Asian polities (later under the Russian Muscovite Empire). As other scholars have demonstrated, the 19th and early 20th century were witness to extraordinary levels of cross-border movement. Muslim Turks from northern *Altishahr* crossed into the Ferghana Valley for seasonal employment and trade while those in Western and Southern *Altishahr* cultivated ties in Afghanistan and Kashmir.⁴ Movement went both ways: by the mid-1800s, there was a sizable population of Kashmiri Muslims, Hindus, and Russian-subject Turkic Muslims in *Altishahr*.⁵ A number of individuals held dual subjecthood, while many held a opportunistic and circumstantial approach to political allegiance. Furthermore, there was a sizable population of sedentary Turks who had been relocated to the north by the Dzhungarians, and a number of these individuals developed political, economic and educational connections with Russian, and then Soviet, Central Asia. While recent scholarship has pointed to a common culture among oases, anecdotal evidence also suggests that cross-border ties were often stronger than those within the contemporary polity of Xinjiang.⁶

² Alternately written Mohammed Amin Buğra.

³ For discussion of the campaign, see James Millward and Peter Perdue “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region Through the Late 19th Century” in *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. Frederick Starr (London: Routledge, 2004), 28. For in-depth discussion of ethnicity in the Qing, see Pamela Crossley, Helen Siu and Donald Sutton eds. *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁴ Jacqueline Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road: An Ethno-History of Ladakh* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2008): 103-130; Laura Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand C. 1760-1860*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 31, 55, 66; Kwangmin Kim, *Borderland Capitalism: Turkestan Produce, Qing Silver, and the Birth of an Eastern Market*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016): 156-184.

⁵ Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations With Khoqand C. 1760-1860*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 131.

⁶ Rian Thum argues for a common pre-Uyghur *Altishahr* identity through sacred texts: Rian Thum, *The sacred routes of Uyghur history* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). Informal interviews conducted by the

A 1953 census declared all Xinjiang residents to belong to one of several ethnic groups: sedentary Turkic Muslims were predominately identified as Uyghur, while nomadic Turks were identified as Kazak or Kyrgyz.⁷ However, as should be clear in the paragraph above, residents of the region historically did not think of themselves as belonging to clearly-delineated ethnic groups. People from the region more commonly referred to themselves and their communities in religious (Muslim), racial (Turk), political, and locational terms.⁸ One could be a Muslim Turk from the oasis town of Kashgar holding a Chinese Nationalist passport. This individual might have a British Indian passport-holding cousin trading in the town of Srinagar in Kashmir, and maintaining households in both Kashmir and Kashgar. These were identities that overlapped and did not lend to a definitive ethnic identity – or a clear allegiance to any one nation-state once they were formed.

The transition from supra-regional empires to modern nation states started with the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911, swiftly followed by the downfall of the Moscovite (Russian) empire and establishment of a Soviet State along Xinjiang's borders. The fall of the Qing ushered in several decades of political experimentation and bloody contestation for regional pre-eminence. At the same time, increased interregional mobility brought exposure to new concepts concerning possible political affinities, political structures, the relationship between locale, locals, culture and state. What was to be the fate of crossborder populations when empires disintegrate and new nations with discrete borders rise from their ashes?

Both Alptekin and Bughra were born in 1901 and commenced their political careers during these tumultuous years. Alptekin, whose father was a minor local notable on the Chinese Nationalist (GMD) government payroll, was employed as a translator in the Nationalist diplomatic outposts in Uzbekistan from 1926-1932. He initially opposed Turkish nationalist movements, including TIRET, and staunchly allied himself with the GMD. In 1928 he won the praise of his employers for foiling a Soviet-backed plot to incite revolution among local Turkis in Xinjiang.⁹ In 1932, Alptekin was called to the Chinese Nationalist capital at Nanjing and later elected to the Legislative Yuan (Chinese National Assembly).

Bughra received a traditional education at the madrassa and, after graduation, served as an instructor at a madrassa in the oasis city of Hotan. He became involved in politics in the 1930s, when he and his brothers headed a revolt against the local Chinese Nationalist Government, culminating in Bughra's participation in the creation of the short-lived Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET, 1933-34, also known as the First East Turkistan Republic), which

author in Xinjiang in 2012-2013 suggested strong historical ties between oasis cities and cross-border trade communities prior to the PRC.

⁷ While "Uyghur" did not come into use as an ethnonym until the PRC, Kazak had long been used to denote members of three related tribes of nomadic Turks and the term has its origins in the 15th Century Kazakh Khanate.

⁸ For discussion on this point, see: Justin Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along Chinas Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Rian Thum "Modular History: Identity Maintenance before Uyghur Nationalism," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71 no. 3 (2012): 627-653; David Brophy, *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

⁹ Ali Taşçı, *Esir Doğu Türkistan İçin İsa Yusuf Alptekin'in Mücadele Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Doğu Türkistan Neşriyat Merkezi, 1985), 66.

reportedly sought Japanese support within the Greater East Asian co-prosperity sphere. When a GMD-Soviet counterattack prevailed, Bughra fled into exile in Afghanistan.¹⁰

Back the Nationalist capitol, Alptekin befriended Sino-Muslim proponents of pan-Islam under a Chinese Nationalist umbrella. In 1937, Alptekin departed on the Near East Delegation under the leadership of prominent Sino-Muslim Pan-Islamist Wang Zengshan.¹¹ The delegation spent two years raising support for the Nationalist Government among the Chinese Muslim diaspora in 13 countries across Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, and it was during this period that Alptekin stayed briefly in the new Turkish Republic.¹² On the way back, the delegation stopped in Afghanistan, where Alptekin found a new recruit in Bughra. Bughra traveled back to China via India, stopping on the way to visit Turki communities in Kashmir and New Delhi. By 1940 the duo – who would closely work together until Bughra’s death in 1965 – were back in China working for the Nationalist government and publishing a Chinese-language journal concerning Xinjiang affairs.¹³

Influenced by Bughra and his recent travels abroad, Alptekin began to adopt a vision for increased sovereignty and local administration in Xinjiang that clashed with Nationalist prerogatives of stability, top-down governance and a unified front. Nonetheless, Alptekin and Bughra were among the new officials sent to run the nationalist government in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in 1944.

Over the next several years, Alptekin and Bughra further developed their vision of Turkic-nationalism and became increasingly disillusioned with Nationalist promises of local self-governance. They used their positions as high-ranking Nationalist officers and access to Nationalist resources to hold public meetings promoting Islami-Turkic identity and published papers heralding local sovereign rule. While in Urumqi, a city located between Alitishr and Dzhungaria, they began to develop a vision of a “Turki” political identity embracing all Turkic Muslims under Chinese nationalist rule. This was a clear break from previous approaches to the regions’ population, which either lumped all Muslims (Chinese-speaking and Turkic-speaking) together, or divided local Turki into sedentary and nomadic groups or by oasis affiliation.¹⁴ Their active propagation of a broader Turki political identity from Urumqi threatened both Nationalist rule and the fragile coalition government established between the Nationalists and the Soviet-backed secular multinational Second East Turkestan Republic (1944-1949) based in northern Xinjiang.¹⁵ By mid-1949 they had split with the Nationalists completely.¹⁶ Just months before

¹⁰ Mehmet Emin Buğra, *Shārqi Türkistan Tarikhi* (New Delhi, 1940).

¹¹ Pang Shiqian, *Jiu Nian Zai Aiji* (Beijing: Zhongguo Yisilanjiao Xiehui, 1950).

¹² Kelly Hammond, *China's Muslims and Japan's Empire Centering Islam in World War II*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2020), 119-120, 137-138.

¹³ Linda Benson, “Uygur Politicians of the 1940s: Mehmet Emin Bugra, Isa Yusuf Alptekin and Mesut Sabri,” *Central Asian Survey*, 10 no. 4, (1991): 87-104.

¹⁴ For previous approaches to categorizing and governing populations in Xinjiang, see Kwangmin and Newby.

¹⁵ For a thorough history of the soviet-backed government and coalition, see Linda Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang 1944-1949* (New York: M. E. Sharp, 1990).

¹⁶ Bughra’s wife, Amina Bughra, had been elected to the Legislative Yuan in 1948 and continued to serve *in absentia* until she reached out and formally resigned from exile in 1955.

Xinjiang fell to the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army and the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan, Alptekin, Bughra and 10,000-11,000 of their affiliates fled Xinjiang.¹⁷

However, it would be over two years before they stepped onto the tarmac in Ankara. When they left their homelands, the East Turkestani were not headed for Turkey. Instead, they followed historic trade routes crossing the Himalayas to Kashmir, where they hoped to find refuge among the sizable cross-border Turkic merchant community in the town of Srinagar. Letters penned by Alptekin and Bughra in 1950 identified this community as East Turkestani and stated clear intent to pursue residence in India.¹⁸ They believed that historic cultural and economic relations would provide a strong base for inclusion in the community.



Alptekin (second from L) and East Turkestanis gather with US Democrat president candidate Adlai Stevenson in Kashmir, summer 1950. The females in the photo are wearing traditional Kazak clothing.

Unfortunately for the East Turkestanis, India too had recently become an independent state, and old affinities were no longer sufficient to claim right to reside. The passing of Article 370 in

¹⁷ Both Alptekin and Bughra referred to this in numerous works. This journey is also documented in "Notes on the Kazak refugees in Kashmir." National Archives of the United States, Department of State, Office of Chinese Affairs, 1950, 350.4; Clark Milton, "How the Kazakhs Fled to Freedom," *National Geographic* (1954) 621-44; "Kazakh Refugees," October 12, 1951, British National Archives, Far Eastern Department, FO 371/92897; and Letter from Orville L. Bennett to Dr. George A. Fitch, March 24, 1955, National Archives of the United States, Department of State, Office for Refugees, Migration, and Voluntary Assistance.

¹⁸ "Letter, Muhammad Amin Bughra, Isa Yusuf Alptekin, and Colonel Adam Sabri to Owen Lattimore," April 06, 1950, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Folder 14 "Sinkiang Refugees 1950-1951", Box 5, Subseries 3 (Correspondence), Series 4 (Owen Lattimore), Subgroup 2 (Administrative Records, 1924-1955), Record Group 08.010, Records of Walter Hines Page School of International Relations 1923/1955, Ferdinand Hamburger Archives, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University.

1951 limited legal residence in Jammu and Kashmir to those present before India's independence in 1947. Alptekin leveraged the network he had formed in the 1930s and, by 1952, had secured a UNHCR-backed offer to emigrate to Turkey as "returning" ethnic Turks for 1,850 of the East Turkestanian refugees. The majority of migrants seem to have stayed behind in India, and assimilated into the local Kashmiri population.¹⁹

Turkish citizenship for ethnic Turks?

Following their flight from Xinjiang and indifferent reception in India, this segment of the East Turkestanian diaspora anchored their identity to their Turkic heritage in immigrating to Turkey as ethnically *Turkish* nationals, at least on paper. They were not alone: between the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and 1994, when regulations were changed, Turkey admitted approximately 1.6 million people as Turkish citizens on the basis of their Turkic ancestry.²⁰ The majority of these peoples hailed from the Balkans, Greece, and the Soviet Union and could claim both Turkic heritage and specific historical connection to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's political predecessor.

While it is not the purpose of this paper to provide a literature survey of the numerous theories concerning the development of models for Turkish citizenship in the early Republic, a brief overview is necessary to contextualize the inclusion of East Turkestanians and other "returning Turks." How were people claimed by the Turkish state? What constitutes the standards for political inclusion and rights-granting, and on what grounds could non-geographically resident peoples be granted Turkish citizenship? While Turkey was established as a secular nation, the implementation of policies was highly affected by a newly-born nationalist sentiment.²¹ Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution reads, "For the purposes of nationality, all the people of Turkey are called 'Turk' notwithstanding their religion or race," yet there was not always clear consensus on whether "Turk" referred to a nationality or a people. By the early 1950s, "Turk" as race had become "an institutionalized aspect of citizenship."²² A "Turk" was assumed to be one of Turkic ancestry, someone with heritage in Turkic culture, and most likely a Sunni Muslim.²³ But perhaps the most important determinant of belonging was something hinted at in Article 88: participation in the community and adoption of a "Turk" identity in the public sphere. Faruk Birtek emphasizes a shift from multilayeredness of Ottoman identities with allowable separate spheres for private and public citizenship to almost exclusive emphasis on the public persona

¹⁹ A reported 10,000 refugees traversed the Himalayas to Kashmir, where they lodged with an unknown number of resident Turki merchants. As only 1,850 were granted Turkey's offer of citizenship, several thousand would have remained in Kashmir. Descendants of those who stayed in Kashmir report integrating into the local population. See Sunaina Kumar, "For Uighur Exiles, Kashmir Is Heaven," accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/11/uighur-exiles-kashmir-heaven-161117133848689.html>.

²⁰ Ahmet Icduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Turkish Migration Policies: A Critical Historical Retrospective" *Perceptions* 18 no. 3 (2013): 167 – 190.

²¹ Emre Öktem, "The legal notion of nationality in the Turkish Republic: from Ottoman legacy to modern aberrations" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 53 no. 4 (2017): 638.

²² Bora Isyar, "The origins of Turkish Republican citizenship: the birth of race" *Nations and Nationalism* 11 no. 3 (2005): 343.

²³ For further discussion of different aspects of Turkish citizenship and the relationship between policy and practice in the early Republic, see Mesut Yeğen "Turkish Nationhood: Civic and Ancestral and Cultural" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 23 no. 3 (2017):318-339.

within a highly mobilized public.²⁴ In this transition, the practice of citizenship becomes less contextual and more unified, particularly in public membership.²⁵ Birtek goes on to explain that, citizenship as it developed in the early Turkish Republic “is a political institution built on a rigorously exclusionary public space, and because of its standardizing logic, which the volitional core almost requires, it is intolerant of any subgroupings that might presume to exist within the national society. It cannot accommodate bases of identity that could be created outside of the republican space.”²⁶ In short, Turkish citizenship comes with strings attached. Ethnic Turks from outside the Republic are thus accommodated and offered incorporation into the nation, but expected to leave behind other possible expressions of ethno-political identity. Once they step onto Turkish soil, they are Turk.

DEVLET ARŞİVLERİ GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
CUMHURİYET ARŞİVİ

T.C. Bakanlar Kurulunun 13/3/1952 gün ve 3/14596 sayılı kararı ve Toprak ve İskân İşleri Genel Md. II/Kasım/1952 tarih ve 3232-O-12496/50272 sayılı yazılarına göre iskanlı Göçmen No. 138

Genel No. :
Özel No. :
Eki :

DEVLET ARŞİVLERİ GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
CUMHURİYET ARŞİVİ

Fig: 4464

Tabiiyet Beyannamesi 238-19529

Eski tabiiyeti: Çin Soyadı: Sığirci Geldiği tarih: 11/11/1952
İrki: Türk Ana dili: Türkçe Oturduğu yer:
Geldiği yer: Hindistan-Kaşmir Konuştuğu dil: İskân İskân gökeli

Aile reisi	Adı	Babası adı	Anası adı	Doğum yeri	Doğum tarihi	Medeni hali	Sayıları
	Çıkan	Seksen	Katabay	Çin	1915	Evli	Çiftçi
Eşi	Aysa	Çarabay	Camal	"	1925	"	
Kızı	Bağrıfa	Çıkan	Aysa	"	1951	"	
Kız Kardeşi	Murilâ	Seksen	Katabay	"	1934	Bekar	
		Yalnız		Dört kızıdır.			

Vize veren konsolosunuz: Yeni Delhi B. Elçiliği Konsolosluk Şubesi Vize tarihi: 23/10/1952 Numarası: 3

Yükarıya yazılan evvelinin doğuluğunu ve Türk yurttaşlığına girmek üzere bu beyannameyi doldürdüğümü tasdik ederiz. 8 - 12 - 1952

ADRES: Aile reisi: Karısı: Regit cemaatları:

B-pannamunun akdini, irade-sine, hakikata ve gösteren vesikaları uygun olduğu anlaşılarak müsababinde muvakkat 8/12/1952 tarih 138 sayılı muhacir kâğıdı verilmiştir. 8 - 12 - 1952

İstanbul Toprak ve İskân Müdürü Hayri Demer

M. U. İcra vekilleri heyetinin tarih: sayılı kararla yurttaşlığımıza alınmıştır.

Intake Papers for a family of Kazaks. Headdress and names identify the family as Kazak.

²⁴ Faruk Birtek, “From affiliation to affinity: citizenship in the transition from empire to the nation-state” in Seyla Benhabib, Ian Shapiro, and Danilo Petranovich, eds. *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29.

²⁵ Ibid, 31-32; 38-39.

²⁶ Ibid, 41.

Selected Translation: Former Nationality: Chinese; Entry Date: Nov 11, 1952; Race: Turk; Mother tongue: Turkish; Residence: -; Place of Origin: India-Kashmir; Settlement Style: Fixed; Birthplace: Chinese Turkestan; Occupation: Shepherd & Farmer

This holds true for migrants from Xinjiang: intake papers list all migrants from Xinjiang/East Turkestan – whether they were nomadic Kazaks from the northern steppe, or sedentary Turks from the oasis cities in the south) – as Turkish-speaking Turks, eligible for citizenship under Law 2510 as returnees. There is nothing to suggest that these people comprised a distinct ethnic group. This is in part due to a careful ambiguity in the Turkish language, where there is no differentiation between “Turk,” “Turkic” and “Turkish” in terms of ethnicity or race. While intake papers do display a confusion about migrants’ origin – some identify their place of origin as “China,” others “Chinese Turkestan,” “East Turkestan,” or simply “Turkistan” (a term formerly used to refer to Russian Central Asia) – they do show that most East Turkestani migrants were from northern Xinjiang, particularly from around the city of Gulja. Judging from hometown, occupation, and dress, the majority of migrants seem to have been not sedentary Turks, but Kazak, while diaspora elite were largely from sedentary communities in the south.²⁷ Yet once in Turkey, all are declared “Turkish-speaking Turks.”

East Turkestani: Not Quite Turk?

Nevertheless, regardless of origin within Xinjiang, two characteristics differentiated East Turkestan migrants from the majority of ethnic Turk migrants to Turkey: they had minimal historical or geographical connection to the Ottoman Empire, and they were the only group to actively advocate for a distinct political identity tied to sovereignty in their homeland after accepting citizenship in Turkey.

The story of East Turkestani migration into Turkey also intersects with that of Turkish nationalism. Most literature on the birth and development of the Turkish nation, Turkish nationalism, and Turkish citizenship focuses on the early decades of the republic, whereas existing literature on “returning Turks” primarily looks at populations from within the historical Ottoman Empire – people with an arguably more compelling connection to the Turkish Republic.²⁸ The incorporation of new people from outside the historical Ottoman Empire – like the East Turkestani – into the Turkish nation during the early Cold War was both framed by and challenged these earlier models of Turkish nationalism.

As mentioned above, the East Turkestani had never resided in a part of the Ottoman Empire and had little historical contact with either the Ottoman Empire or the early Turkish Republic. And yet they were part of the “Turk” imagination. According to official national histories, the Turkish people originally emigrated to Anatolia from the region in Inner Asia roughly corresponding to present-day Mongolia and home to an 8th Century Buddhist empire that today’s Uyghurs claim direct descent from. In theory, both East Turkestani and ethnic Turks come from the same lineage. However, as demonstrated above, the East Turkestani population was

²⁷ Confirmed by Nurlan Kabdykhak, PhD Candidate in Kazakh History at UNC-Chapel Hill.

²⁸ For literature on other migrant communities, see: Zeynel Besleney, *The Circassian Diaspora in Turkey: a political history*, (Milton Park: Routledge, 2014); Sabina Pačariž, *The migrations of Bosniaks to Turkey from 1945 to 1974: the case of Sandžak*, (Sarajevo: Center for Advanced Studies, 2016); Lejla Voloder, *A Muslim Minority in Turkey: migration, ethnicity and religion in a Bosniak community* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

thoroughly “cross-border” by the time a small cohort was granted Turkish citizenship. Turkey, too, is home to an ethnically-mixed population.²⁹ However, even if the claims to common lineage are weak, the presence of East Turkestanis – people supposedly from an ancient Turkic stock – could serve to bolster the “Turk” identity of the new state, as long as they ascribed to this “Turk” civilian identity after accepting Turkish citizenship.

Alptekin and Bughra, however, did not see their acceptance of Turkish citizenship as necessitating full and complete identification with the Turkish state. Both men had been prolific publishers in China in the 1940s, and almost immediately after settling in Istanbul they began publishing books, pamphlets, and articles detailing their plight, denouncing Chinese occupation of Xinjiang, and calling for both Turkish and international attention and assistance in securing the sovereignty of East Turkestan.³⁰ Many of these publications were associated with the East Turkestan Refugee Association, which they established in Istanbul in 1953. The majority of these publications appeared in Turkish, though they also published booklets and articles in Arabic and English.³¹

Publications in Nationalist China had primarily focused first on outlining issues in Xinjiang and introducing the region and people to Chinese officials, and then on cultivating a sense of Muslim Turki political identity – albeit under the umbrella of the Chinese state. Alptekin and Bughra fled to India intending not to form an independent Turki state, but to gain residence within existing communities. During time in India, perhaps in part due to the Indian states’s refusal to openly grant them Indian citizenship and Kashmiri residence, Alptekin and Bughra’s conceptions of the relationship between land, government and people began to shift. Post-1952 publications in Turkey, particularly the *Voice of Turkestan*, posit East Turkestan as a particular geopolitical locality, and East Turkestani as a political identity with inherent right to sovereignty in this geopolitical space.

Pieces within the *Voice of Turkestan*, not only introduce the East Turkestani as a single political community, but also claim all of Xinjiang as East Turkestan. While the short-lived TIRET had only covered a small corner of Altishahr, East Turkestan in the new imaginings encompasses the entire province of Xinjiang, inclusive of oasis cities, nomadic lands in the north, regions that were majority Mongolian, and the eastern trade towns of Hami and Turpan. In the 1950s Alptekin began to claim that the Communist Chinese were illegally occupying this land as a

²⁹Celine Wawruschka, “Genetic History and Identity: The Case of Turkey,” *Medieval worlds*, 01 (2016): 123 – 161; Can Alkan, Pinar Kavak, Mehmet Somel, Omer Gokcumen, Serkan Ugurlu, Ceren Saygi, Elif Dal, et al. “Whole Genome Sequencing of Turkish Genomes Reveals Functional Private Alleles and Impact of Genetic Interactions with Europe, Asia and Africa.” *BMC Genomics* 15, (2014).

³⁰Linda Benson, “Uyghur Politicians of the 1940s: Mehmet Emin Bugra, Isa Yusuf Alptekin and Mesut Sabri,” *Central Asian Survey*, 10/4, (1991): 87-104; Tekin Tuncer, “Mehmet Emin Buğra'nın Mektuplarında Türkistan'ın Sesi Dergisinin Çıkarılması Süreci” *Journal of Turkish World Studies* 17/2 (2017): 51-76. For post-1953, see *Doğu Türkistan'ın Sesi*, published by the ETRA under Bughra’s direction.

³¹ See *Voice of Turkestan: Türkistan Sesi*, republished by Ankara Yıldız Matbaacılık ve Gazetecilik, 1953-1956, not to be confused with the later (1984-present) *Doğu Türkistan'ın Sesi* (Voice of East Turkestan), published by the East Turkistan Publishing Center. Also discussed in: Tekin Tuncer, “Mehmet Emin Buğra'nın Mektuplarında Türkistan'ın Sesi Dergisinin Çıkarılması Süreci” *Journal of Turkish World Studies* 17 no. 2 (2017): 51-76.

colonist state, and that, following the principles of self-determination, East Turkestan should be a sovereign nation – and himself and Bughra were the rightful heads of state.³²

Internationally, Alptekin accompanied these publications with letters penned to American statesmen, speeches at gatherings of the East Turkestan diaspora in Cairo and Mecca, and attendance at high-profile regional conferences including the Afro-Asian Conferences in 1955 and 1965 and the World Muslim Congress in 1965.³³ In Turkey, the duo met with Turkish politicians, joined Kazak leaders in marches in Istanbul, and encouraged East Turkestani – primarily Uyghur – cultural performances.³⁴

Within a domestic Turkish context, Alptekin and Bughra presented the East Turkestani community as a cohesive ethno-political community, highlighting the ethno-historical roots they shared with their new compatriots. Official history in Turkey maintains that contemporary Turks (and not just the elite among their political predecessors) hailed from the Turkic tribes of Central Asia. East Turkestani leaders latched onto this narrative to present themselves as quintessentially Turkish.³⁵ Among Muslim leaders across Asia and Africa, however, Alptekin highlighted common religious heritage and harkened back to the golden age of transnational Islamic intellectual networks in his request for support for a fellow Muslim community.³⁶ Alptekin couched his appeals in the argument that one Muslim community was duty-bound to uphold and protect the interests of another.

Vis-à-vis Americans, from US president candidate Adlai Stevenson to Richard Nixon, however, Alptekin stuck to a different theme: unjust Chinese occupation, anti-communism, and the right to self-determination.³⁷ For example, in this 1969 letter to President Nixon, Alptekin hails the US

³² Mehmet Emin Buğra, *Doğu Türkistan'ın hürriyet dâvası ve Çin siyaseti*, (İstanbul: Osmanbey Publishing House, 1954); Mehmet Emin Buğra and Isa Yusuf Alptekin, *Eastern Turkistan Rejects the Red Autonomy* (Ankara: Son Havadis, 1955).

³³ Alptekin attempted to attend the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in 1955, but was denied an Indonesian Visa. East Turkestani supporter Ruzi Nazar attended and advocated for Alptekin on his behalf. See Enver Altaylı, *A Dark path to Freedom: from the Red Army to the CIA* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2017): 183-195. For other advocacy abroad, see: Işık Kuşçu-Bonnenfant, "The Origins of Uyghur Long Distance Nationalism: The First Generation Uyghur Diaspora in Turkey," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları (OAKA) Dergisi* 8 no. 16 (2018): 73-94; Hon. John M. Murphy of New York, in the House of Representatives, 'Isa Yusuf Alptekin--Defender of Freedom', "March 03, 1970, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Congressional Record (Bound Edition), Volume 116, Part 5 (March 3, 1970 to March 11, 1970), Extensions of Remarks, March 3, 1970, 5795-5796. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208600>.

³⁴ Kazaks and Uyghurs can be distinguished by their dress. Historical photos show both Kazaks and Uyghurs in marches, but only Uyghurs in sponsored public performances.

³⁵ For example, see Isa Yusuf Alptekin, *Unutulmuş Vatan: Doğu Türkistan*, (İstanbul: Seha Nesriyat ve Ticaret, 1992).

³⁶ Yufeng Mao, "A Muslim Vision for the Chinese Nation: Chinese Pilgrimage Missions to Mecca during World War II," *Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 2 (2011): 373 – 395.

³⁷ "Letter, Isa Yusuf Alptekin to Owen Lattimore," November 14, 1950, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Folder 14 "Sinkiang Refugees 1950-1951", Box 5, Subseries 3 (Correspondence), Series 4 (Owen Lattimore), Subgroup 2 (Administrative Records, 1924-1955), Record Group 08.010, Records of Walter Hines Page School of International Relations 1923/1955, Ferdinand Hamburger Archives, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University; "Letter, Isa Yusuf Alptekin, President of the National Center for the Liberation of Eastern Turkestan, to President Richard Nixon," February 01, 1970, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives and Records Administration; "Isa Yusuf Alptekin, 'Memorandum Sent to Richard Nixon, President of the United States of America'," July 12, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive; Isa Yusuf Alptekin,

as a “fortress of liberty” and “protector of captive nations” – of which East Turkestan is one.³⁸ He asks for recognition of East Turkestan as a captive nation, and characterizes his campaign as a “struggle for liberty.” More significantly, he addresses Nixon as a fellow head of state. Outside of Turkey, Alptekin consistently presented himself not as a common Turkish citizen, but as the head of the East Turkestani *political* community.

Immediate Security vs. Long-term Sovereignty

While community leaders presented the East Turkestani as a unified community, the lines along which they defined this community shifted depending on audience. In depicting the East Turkestani, they drew upon notions of common territory (Turkic, but not Ottoman); common historical experience, especially vis-à-vis different incarnations of the Chinese state and resulting in an anti-communist ideology; shared Turkic language and heritage; and shared Muslim faith. None of these traits were exclusive to the East Turkestani diaspora, and there was great variation in manifestation of these traits and experiences among members of the diaspora. Nevertheless, these traits taken cumulatively were used as a base for intercommunal solidarity and outward projection of a singular ethno-political identity.

When these traits are examined comprehensively, it also becomes apparent that East Turkestani leaders aligned themselves with the Turkish state, but never saw themselves as *exclusively* Turkish nationals. Turkey was a supportive homebase from which they could advocate for interests of their own, not a *homeland* embodying those interests.

This narrative, of the East Turkestani as Turkic, and Turkey as a potential homebase, gained traction among potential migrants. Several other nations, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, had larger East Turkestani diaspora populations in 1950, but both of these nations early developed relations with China and demonstrated reluctance to take in any anti-Chinese East Turkestani immigrants.³⁹ As Turkey was one of the only countries that offered non-communist Turks an easy route to citizenship, it developed as the intellectual and political center for diaspora, as well as a default destination for East Turkestani leaving the communist sphere.

Far from being fickle opportunists, the East Turkestani migrants to Turkey made choices exemplifying one of the fundamental challenges facing borderland and diaspora communities: the need to negotiate between obtaining immediate security and keeping the door open for eventual sovereignty. To obtain legal residence, citizenship and access to political rights and protections, East Turkestanis in diaspora relied on emphasis of shared characteristics and fundamental compatibility with the host country. East Turkestanis never repudiated their status as “Turks.” Well into the nineties, when he became a figurehead for pan-Turkism, Alptekin

An Appeal to the Heads of States and Governments of the Free world, (Istanbul: P.O.B. 56 Fatih, 1969); Alptekin, *Doğu Türkistan insanlıktan yardım istiyor-East Turkistan Expects Help from Humankind* (Istanbul: Otağ Matbaası, 1974).

³⁸ Alptekin, “Memorandum Sent to Richard Nixon.”

³⁹ Egypt’s Al Azhar University was a destination for higher Islamic learning, and there were several hundred scholars and merchants in Egypt; Mecca had approximately 50,000 Uyghur merchants in 1950. John Chen, “Re-Orientation: The Chinese Azharites between Umma and Third World, 1938 – 55,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no. 1 (2014): 24-51. See Jacobs on rejection of immigration requests to Saudi Arabia: Justin Jacobs, *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 218-220

stressed the common Turkic identity he shared with the Turkish state. However, to maintain grounds for claiming East Turkestan as an [occupied] sovereign state, the East Turkestani in diaspora could not fully affiliate with the Turkish state. They needed to retain a unique political identity. Because of the way Turkish citizenship for “returning” Turks was envisioned, there thus arose an inevitable tension between the East Turkestani’s emphasis on independent identity and their acceptance of Turkish citizenship.

A Wrench in the Works: The 1967 Arrival of “Afghani” “East Turkestani”

In the mid-1960s, a group of 275 migrants worked with Alptekin to secure Turkish and UNHCR support to immigrate to Turkey as ethnic Turkish citizens. These migrants, originally hailing from Xinjiang, had originally petitioned the PRC to emigrate to Afghanistan on the grounds that they were *Afghani* citizens stuck on the wrong side of the border in 1949. After struggling to integrate into Afghanistan, however, community imam Mehmet Kasim Canturk made contact with Alptekin through the UNHCR office in Kabul and eventually managed to arrange for their immigration to Turkey as stateless ethnic Turks.⁴⁰ Like the earlier wave of migrants, intake documents demonstrate that the group from Afghanistan was primarily from northern Xinjiang, and were primarily settled in the Sumer Neighborhood of the central Anatolian city of Kayseri.

However, the wave of Xinjiang-born immigrants who arrived in Turkey via Afghanistan in the 1960s are identifiable as such only by their place of birth and the location of visa processing. When this group of immigrants had capitalized on the establishment of PRC-Afghanistan bilateral relations in 1959 to claim they were Afghani ‘stuck’ on the wrong side of the border in 1949 they were allowed to relinquish claims to Chinese citizenship and emigrate to Afghanistan as Afghani nationals. However, a number found the Afghan state unsympathetic and, under Canturk’s guidance, petitioned the UNHCR for refugee status, thereby renouncing their newly-won Afghani citizenship. By the time they arrived in Turkey, they had already denied two state’s offers of political recognition as nationals and were thus suspect potential citizens. On their immigration papers they are identified as *tebaasiz*, an archaic Ottoman term denoting stateless subjects. Political claims to anything other than the Turkish state are thus erased in the papers that grant them citizenship

⁴⁰ Kadir Dikbaş, “Vatan İçin Vatan Ayrılık,” *Kadir Dikbaş*, February 9, 2015; Tekin Tuncer, “Doğu Türkistan’dan Türkiye’ye Yapılan 1961 Göçü ve Mehmet Kasım Cantürk,” *Uluslararası Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları Sempozyumu, 2014*, 2014, 270–78. See also “Information: Refugees: From East Turkestan.” November 17, 1967, to October 17, 1968. British National Archives, Far Eastern Department, FO 95/15.

T. C.
BAŞVEKÂLET
Toprak ve İskân İşleri
Genel Müdürlüğü

Sıra No.
1

Ankara Toprak ve İskân İşleri
Tabiiyet Beyannamesi

Eski tabiiyeti : Tebaasız Soyadı : Gültekin Geldiği tarih : 5.11.1967
 Irkı : Türk Ana dili : Türkçe Oturduğu yer : Kayseri
 Geldiği yer : Afganistan Konuştuğu dil : Türkçe İskân şekli : Sabit

Adı	Babasının adı	Anasının adı	Doğum yeri	Doğum tarihi	Medeni hali	San'atı
Abdülkadir	Abdülkadir	Rahime	Doğu Türkistan-Gulca	1927	Dul	Çarangoz
Oğlu	Hal Mehmet	İnan	" "	1947	Beşâr	İşçi
"	Örsün Mehmet	"	" "	1949	"	Talibe
Yalnız üç nüfusdur.						

Vize veren Konsolosumuz
Kabil B. Elçiliği 5.11.1967 80/67

Yukarıda yazılı cevapların doğruluğunu ve Türk yurttaşlığına girmek üzere bu beyannamemi doldürdüğümüza tasdik ederiz. 6. / 11 / 19 67

Aile Reisi Karısı Resit Çocukları

Adres : Sümer Mahallesi Kayseri

Beyannamenin alkışlarının ifadesinde, hakikata ve gösterilen vesikalara uygun olduğu anlaşılarak mukabilinde muvakkat 6.11.1967 tarih 1 sayılı muhacir kâğıdı verimştir. 6 / 11 / 19 67

İcra Vekilleri Heyetinin tarih sayılı kararıyle yurttaşlığımıza alınmıştır.

Intake Papers for a family from Gulja (a city in Northern Xinjiang) immigrating via Afghansitan in 1967

Selected Translation: Former Nationality: Tebaasız; Entry Date: Nov 5, 1967; Race: Turk; Mother tongue: Turkish; Residence: Kayseri; Place of Origin: Afghanistan; Settlement Style: Fixed; Birthplace: East Turkistan - Gulca (city in Dzhungaria); Occupations: Carpenter, Worker, Student.

The Turkish state importantly *did* grant them citizenship when other states would not, and the state supported the East Turkestanis's anti-communist stance. Furthermore, Turkey was outwardly supportive of both domestic efforts to cultivate East Turkestanian culture, particularly through public performance emphasizing ancient Turkic culture. However, the Turkish state was increasingly ambivalent about possible alternate political identity among East Turkestanian, specifically in regards to the origins of these immigrants and any purported relation between geographic homeland and political community. As we see in the intake papers, there was a concerted effort to incorporate East Turkestanian migrants into the Turkish nation in a manner that set clear boundaries around identity-making.

East Turkestanian to Ethnic Minorities

Within the East Turkestanian community, the split between urban elite settled in Istanbul and rural majority shuttered to the Anatolian hinterland only continued to grow. Kazaks in Kayseri

begrudged their lower living standards and limited access to upward mobility via the educational and occupational opportunities available to those in the metropole.⁴¹ After the death of the more moderate Bughra in 1965, this was coupled with growing resentment against Alptekin, who didn't seem to represent Kazak immigrants. This was true on the international stage, where Alptekin presented himself as the representative of all East Turkestan, but highlighted sedentary Turk experiences, and domestically, where East Turkestan cultural performances often highlighted Altishahr culture.



In this photo, taken in the 1960s in Kayseri, for example, individuals wearing traditional Altishahr (not Kazak) dress stand under a banner reading "East Turkestan Immigrant Association"

When Delilhan Canaltay, heir of an acclaimed Kazak martyr, arrived from Kashmir in 1980, he quickly grew a following of fellow Kazaks espousing an anti-elitist, locally-oriented, community identity. But not all change came from direct challenges to Alptekin's authority. In the 1980s, China's Reform and Opening made it possible for average Chinese nationals to travel abroad. Thousands of Uyghurs and Kazaks from Xinjiang flocked to Turkey for educational and entrepreneurial opportunities. This new wave of temporary residents arrived with a sharp sense of their *ethnic* identity and, seeped in decades of state propaganda and ethnically separate schooling, viewed Kazaks and Uyghurs as two distinct peoples. Most contemporary scholars of Uyghur history, literature and language in Turkey arrived from Xinjiang during this period. While they pursued their higher education in Turkish institutions, they often applied the rigid ethnic parameters borrowed from China into their Turkish scholarship. Gradually, the history of the East Turkestan diaspora was re-written as the history of the *Uyghur* diaspora, with Kazak

⁴¹ Justin Jacobs, "Exile Island: Xinjiang Refugees and the "One China" Policy in Nationalist Taiwan, 1949–1971," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 1 (2016): 214

contribution excluded almost entirely. The East Turkestani history as re-imagined by this later generation of scholars largely downplays some of Alptekin and Bughra's more problematic affiliations and highlights the ahistorical presence of a strong *Uyghur* ethnic identity among members in diaspora. While newcomers were influenced by or admired Alptekin's vision for an independent East Turkestan, his plans for sovereignty came to seem untenable, especially following the thaw in Sino-American relations. By the end of the 1980s, Alptekin's vision for an independent East Turkestan no longer received unanimous backing from the diaspora community.

Alptekin, however, would not accept defeat of his East Turkestani dream. In the late eighties and early nineties Alptekin and his son (Erkin Alptekin, future head of the World Uyghur Congress) partnered with Mongolian and Tibetan nationalists to publish several issues of *Common Voice: Journal of the Allied Committee of the Peoples of Eastern Turkestan, Mongolia, Manchuria and Tibet presently under China*. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the nonagenarian joined pan-Turkists and Turkish nationalists, including Turgut Özal (Prime Minister and President of Turkey, Motherland Party leader), Alparslan Türkeş (founder and president of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party), and Azerbaijan's notorious President Abulfaz Elchibey.⁴² His last approach to securing independence for East Turkestan points to a political ideology that departs from absolute national sovereignty. Support for Turkish leadership across Asia encompassed advocacy for an independent East Turkestan. This approach, which borders on neo-suzerainty, assumes that layers of ethno-political identity are possible, and need not be exclusive or contradictory. But is non-linear political identity possible in a politically demarcated world? Pan-Turkism soon sputtered out, and Alptekin passed away in 1995, largely laying this question to rest.

Just one year before his death, Turkey adopted new regulations on asylum and halted the policy that had allowed for the immigration of so many East Turkestanis. In 1994, the state began to detain and deport illegal non-refugee entrants, regardless of ethnic heritage.⁴³

Following the establishment of what is essentially a police state in Xinjiang, many Chinese-citizen Uyghurs have either escaped overseas or become stranded overseas, unable to return due to certain imprisonment in the internment camps.⁴⁴ At present, analysts estimate that 15-50,000 now-stateless Uyghurs reside in Turkey, crowding the historic East Turkestani neighborhoods of Istanbul and Kayseri.⁴⁵ Without legal residence they have minimal recourse to state-sponsored

⁴² Dr. Omer Kul claims they met as early as 1963. See Omer Kul, "Vefatının 24. Yılında Basbug Alparslan Turkes ve Dogu Turkistan Davası" *Ogun Gazetesi*, April 4, 2021.

⁴³ Kemal Kirişçi, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (2000): 11.

⁴⁴ In 2021, the US declared China's treatment of Uyghurs to be "genocide." See: Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State, "Determination of the Secretary of State on Atrocities in Xinjiang" *Press Statement*, January 19, 2021. For an overview of recent developments in Xinjiang, see Austin Ramzey, "China's Oppression of Muslims in Xinjiang, Explained" *The New York Times*, January 20, 2021. For discussion of the possible fates of refugees if they return to China, see: Jessica Batke, "China is Forcing Uighurs Abroad to Return Home. Why Aren't More Countries Refusing to Help?" *China File*, August 14, 2017; Asim Kashgarian and Ezel Sahinkaya, "Analysts: Extradition Treaty Between Turkey, China Endangers Uighur Refugees" *Voice of America*, January 07, 2021. China is currently using the Belt and Road Initiative to pressure Turkey into compliance.

⁴⁵ Official figures hover around 10,000; Academics in Turkey, including Erkin Emet and Abduressit Celil Karluk, believe the number is higher. *Personal communication*. See also, Mettursun Beydulla, "Experiences of Uyghur

refugee programs, official education and employment, or basic social services. Recent arrivals struggle to understand why they, too, aren't extended the same welcome as earlier generations.⁴⁶ Are they not also Turk? From the state's perspective, however, previous waves of East Turkestanian immigrants have failed to hold up their end of the bargain, accepting Turkish citizenship only to advocate for a separate political identity. If the East Turkestanis won't declare unequivocal commitment to Turkey, then what is Turkey's commitment to them? Unfortunately for today's Uyghurs, ethnic affiliation does not provide a sufficient basis for unconditional political inclusion.

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⁴⁶Halis Akyıldız, "Türkiye, Doğu Türkistanlıların da vatanıdır" ("Turkey is also the East Turkestanian's Homeland") *Anadolu Ajansı*, Aug 9, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkiye-dogu-turkistanlilarin-da-vatanidir/1553482>; "Türkiye'de Yaşayan Doğu Türkistanlılar da Vatandaşlık İstiyor" ("East Turkistanis residing in Turkey also want Citizenship") *Haberler*, July 6, 2016.

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