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The influence of intellectuals of the first half of the 20th century on Uyghur politics

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In the first half of the 20th century, as a result of the Uyghur education movement that spread across Eastern Turkistan, a new understanding and national consciousness started to develop among Uyghurs. Uyghur intellectuals trained abroad, along with the intellectuals from different countries, played a prominent role in the development of nationalism in this period. These Uyghur intellectuals included both those in Eastern Turkistan and Uyghur intellectuals in diaspora. The emergence and development of the Uyghur intellectual class in this period took place in accordance with the dispersion of Uyghurs across three different geographical regions: Eastern Turkistan; Central Asia and Russia; and Turkey and the Middle East.[1]

The rise of the Uyghur education movement played a significant role in the emergence of the Uyghur intellectual class. The Uyghur education movement, which started in the 1920s and 1930s, was shaped and mobilized by three groups within Uyghur society.

The first group consisted of businessmen and merchants who traveled abroad and saw the development of neighboring nations. They include the Musabay brothers' family, the Muhiti brothers, Tash Ahunum, and others. They built schools and funded these schools with their own resources, thereby assuring the continued existence and expansion of these schools.

The second group was made up of intellectuals who were trained abroad. The representatives of this group included Mesut Sabiri, Memet Eli Tewpiq, Tursun Efendi, Qutluq Shewqi, and the founders of Ili educational associations, including Merup Seidi, Teyiphaji Sabitof, and other intellectuals that had returned to East Turkistan from the Soviet Russia before 1932.

The third group comprised religious scholars who were part of the Jadid movement. Figures from this group include Abdulqadir Damolla, Sabit Damolla, Abdukerimhan Mehsum, Shemsidin Damolla, and Muhemmed Imin Bughra.

In the 1930s and 1940s, a significant number of Uyghur intellectuals emerged as a result of the advancement of Uyghur education. Central Asia became a major resource for Uyghur intellectuals, and the number of intellectuals who were trained in different fields of the arts and sciences in universities in this region increased, and the standards of scientific endeavor advanced.

Between 1934 and 1937, Sheng Shicai sent more than around 400 students to the Central Asian University in Tashkent and to other colleges in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as a result of pressures from the national independence movement and the support of the Soviet Union.[2] He also built high schools, teacher-training schools, and the Xinjiang Institute in Ürümchi, and he established the Union of Cultural Development for all the ethnic groups of the province. The Union of Uyghur Cultural Development was the biggest cultural organization in Xinjiang and included 1883 schools with 180 thousand students.[3]

Various associations took action in the field of education. In this period, a generation of Uyghur intellectuals, with university or high school degrees, was cultivated. These intellectuals played the role of promoters, organizers, and leaders of a broad-based political movement in the 1930s and 1940s.

In this paper, I focus on the role of Uyghur intellectuals in the political life of the Uyghurs in this period and explains their basic ideas. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Uyghur nationalist movement increased its strength, transforming into a national independence movement that aimed to construct Uyghur national identity and establish Uyghur statehood. It achieved its first accomplishments in two different times. National sovereignty with self-determination was established in Kashgar on November 12, 1933, and in Ghulja on November 12, 1944. In this nationalist movement and in various independence struggles, Uyghur intellectuals played an active and significant role.

Of course, the members of the Uyghur intellectual class of this period were deeply influenced by ideological struggles and opinions of the countries that they were trained in. They applied the principles of the ideological movements and strategies of political struggles they saw elsewhere to the national independence struggle of the Uyghur people. The external ideologies that they encountered or they accepted were directly related to the Uyghur political struggle in the first half of the 20th century, to the principles of sovereignty of the two Eastern Turkistan Republics, and to their state ideologies and goals.

In my opinion, it is possible to make a tripartite classification of the ideological sources and philosophical trends of the Uyghur intellectual class in the first half of the 20th century.

1. Ideals for establishing an independent Turkic republic based on Turkic nationalism and Islam as the official state religion.

The source of this idea was the awakening and blossoming of Islamism in the Muslim world, including northern and western Asia, calls for independence there, and the goals of establishing independent states by bringing together the Turkic nations, and the Idil-Ural Turkic people of Eurasia.

The representatives of this ideological trend included Uyghurs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and intellectuals from other groups who actively participated in the nationalist revolts of 1933 and 1934. They played important roles in establishing and leading the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic, occupying prominent posts in the government. Among them were intellectuals who had visited Istanbul, Cairo, Bombay, Kabul, Kazan, Bukhara, Tashkent, and other cities, were trained in the

universities in these cities, and went back to their own homelands, with the aim of launching an education movement and of strengthening political and national identity in Eastern Turkistan.

Several progressive Uyghur religious scholars, including Abduqadir Damolla, Muhemmed Imin Bughra, Sabit Damolla, Abdulla Damolla, Shemsidin Damolla, and Qutluq Haji Shewqi, were not only the leaders of the reform and education movements among Uyghurs. They also aimed to promote and carry out principles based on republicanism and national independence. Almost all of them had lived for long periods in Muslim countries, including Turkey, and in a number of cases they were also educated in these countries. They were thus influenced by the ideological trends in these countries and tried to apply these ideas to the political life and destiny of the Uyghurs.

Although these religious scholars, under the leadership of Sabit Damolla, aimed to synthesize Islamic and Republican ideals, their main aims were to establish a state with national characteristics and to bring under one rule Uyghurs, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Uzbek, and other Turkic nations. The "Association of Independence," which was founded in 1933 in Kashgar,[4] took the organizations of the "*Young Bukharanias*"[5] and "*Young Khivans,"*[6] which had existed in Central Asia at the beginning of the 20th century, as a model.

Most of the participants in this political organization in Kashgar were Uyghur intellectuals, religious scholars, and businessmen. The association endorsed republican ideals and attempted to rule Kashgar with a republican regime. Some Uzbek representatives, who struggled against Soviet rule and the Bolsheviks in the Ferghana Valley, relocated to Kashgar and also joined this organization.[7]

After May 1933, when Kashgar was under rebel control, the Association of Independence actively offered programs about the republican system of government in Kashgar and created the first parliament in East Turkistan – *Kashgher Millet Mejlisi*. All members of the Association and representatives of local intellectual, religious, business and agricultural circles in Kashgar participated in this congress.[8] The *Kashgher Millet Mejlisi* (Kashgar People's Congress) had the military and administrative authority to decide government policy and to appoint certain high-ranking officials. The Congress tried to avoid the old Chinese system.

The Association of Independence was a cornerstone of the East Turkistan Republic and actively tried to unite all the guerrilla groups while preparing the political and nationalist foundations for an independent state.

Some of the Uyghur and Uzbek intellectuals in Kashgar and opinion leaders with Jadidist and pro-independence ideals, as well as political figures who participated in the political events in Central Asia of the 1920s and 1930s—especially those involved in the activities of the *Shurai-Islamiye* Organization—took part in the Autonomous Government of Turkistan, engaging in pro-independence movements which were later labeled as *basmachi* and condemned by the Soviet Union.[9] Some of the participants in the Association of Independence were familiar with Turkic national state ideology and the Soviet–Russian state administrative system in Central Asia through their experiences with the Turkistan Autonomous Government in Kokand.

The "formal" beginning of the "Basmachi" movement is usually associated with the Tsarist Imperial Decree of June 25, 1916, which ordered the first non-voluntary recruitment of Central Asians into the army during the First World War.[10] The movement was a reaction not only to conscription, but to the Russian conquest itself and the policies employed by the tsarist state in Western Turkistan. After communists destroyed the Turkistan Autonomous Government in the Ferghana Valley, the struggle of Muslims of Western Turkistan against communists not only continued, but escalated in intensity. The struggle continued under various methods well into the 1930s.

Participants in anti-Soviet, anti-Russian national liberation movements, such as Setiwaldijan, Yusufjan, Sofizade, Chipaq Ghazi, Janibek, and many others, had escaped to Kashgar in the 1920s and 1930s. They not only participated in the national liberation movements and actively

supported and participated in establishing the Eastern Turkistan Republic in Kashgar but also took charge in leadership positions in the government.

Religious scholars who, under the leadership of Sabit Damolla, had lived or were trained in Muslim countries, played an important role, alongside Uyghur intellectuals, in the establishment of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic. Sabit Damolla, who was educated in Turkey, Egypt, and India, was a politician trained in religion and the natural sciences, who also had clear political viewpoints, a keen understanding of domestic and foreign policy, and who had knowledge of political science.[11] He brought together the intellectuals of Kashgar to form the association for independence and, later, the government of the Eastern Turkistan Republic itself.[12]

2. Intellectual Component of East Turkistan Islamic Republic

On November 12, 1933, the people of the Kashgar established the East Turkistan Republic with Kashgar as its capital. The Establishment of new republic was an event of great historical moment in development of Uyghur nationalism.[13] The new republic had all the trappings of a modern state, such as a constitution, flag, legal system, and government institutions,[14] and its institutions were influenced by those of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk's Turkey. This influence was due to the fact that some Turkish intellectuals, such as Mahmut Nadimbeg and others who came from Turkey, played an important role in the organizing of the Republican state system. They participated in all events, including the ceremony for pledging the establishment of the republic, in discussions on the state flag and state anthem, and in the inauguration of the announcement of a republic.[15]

The new republic tried to establish diplomatic relations with a range of countries such as the Soviet Union, Turkey, Great Britain, and Afghanistan, and to obtain assistance from them. Uyghur sources indicate that another eleven Uyghurs and another Turkish intellectual also took part, including the famous education leader Memet Eli Tewpiq, who was originally from Artush, received a higher education in Turkey, and was sent to Kashgar by the Turkish Youth Union in the fall of 1933.[16] These intellectuals actively participated in various projects in this short-lived republic and in the enlightenment movement in the Kashgar-Artush region, until the repression by Sheng Shicai in 1937-1938. Most of them were killed by Sheng.

According to James A. Millward's analysis, a high percentage of the ETR leaders were educators or rich merchants from Kashgar-Artush area, and had been associated with the Uyghur enlightenment movement of the 1910-1920s.[17] Among the sixteen members of the cabinet, ten of the ministers were intellectuals who had lived abroad for long periods and who were educated in these countries. Prime Minister Sabit Damolla traveled to and was educated in Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, and India.[18] Sabit Damolla was also a teacher at the Karakash New Islamic School and therefore a supporter of Muslim education reform. In addition to his status as a religious authority, Sabit had recently returned from the Hajj in 1933 and was heavily influenced by Islamic reform movements during his journey through India, Egypt and Turkey.[19]
His personal secretary, Telet Musabay, was trained in Istanbul and Moscow.[20] The secretary for foreign affairs of ETR, Kasimjan Haji, was educated in India.

The secretary for internal affairs, Yunusbeg Seyidzade, graduated from Xinjiang's Russian Language College for Politics and Law, where the primary language of education was Russian. He was the first Uyghur intellectual to be educated in the first Xinjiang provincial college, established by Yang Zengxin, a Xinjiang warlord. The secretary of religious affairs, Shemsidin Damolla, was formerly a teacher in the Artush school and had received religious education in Central Asia. He was one of the progressive participants in Kashgar's modern education program provided by Turkish educationalist Ahmet Kamal in the 1910s.[21] The secretary of education, Abdukerimhan Mehsum, lived and was trained in Soviet Russia and participated in the Uyghur nationalist movement there in 1919-1920.[22]

Obul Hesen Haji, who was appointed as the secretary of trade and agriculture for the republic, had lived and traded for more than 20 years in

Tashkent, Ufa, St. Petersburg, and Moscow, and was also educated in the latter city.[23] He was the younger brother of the industrialists and educationalists, known as the Musabay brothers, who founded the first jadidist schools in the Kashgar-Artush area and a technical training school in Ghulja. Four Uzbek ministers of the republic, including the secretary of justice, Zerip Qari Haji, the secretary of health, Abdulla Xani, the secretary of military affairs, Sultanbek, and the chief of central command headquarters, Yusufjan, were all educated men from Russian Turkistan.[24]

Although the president of the republic, Hoja Niyaz Haji, and the chief of military affairs, Mahmut Muhiti, were not highly educated, they had lived for many years in Russia and had a broad knowledge of contemporary issues. Hoja Niyaz Haji escaped to Ili in 1912 after the Timur uprising in Qumul (Hami), and then escaped to Russian territory, and served in the Tsarist Russian army in the First World War. Mahmut Muhiti, was an activist in the Turpan Uyghur enlightenment movement and the younger brother of a Uyghur merchant and educational leader Mehsut Muhiti.[25] After the collapse of the ETR, he became lieutenant general and chief of the 6th cavalry division in the Xinjiang provincial army under the Sheng Shicai government. He also was a supporter of the Uyghur cultural-education movement and of the development of Uyghur nationalism in the Kashgar-Artush region. Memet Eli Tewpiq, who graduated from college in Istanbul with the strong support of Mahmut Muhiti in 1934-1937, started a new educational trend in the Uyghur enlightenment movement. He opened 24 European-style elementary schools and teacher training schools in the Kashgar-Artush area[26] and educated young students about Uyghur nationalism and ideologies of enlightenment.[27]

When we look at the structure of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic, in addition to the ministers stated above, most of their associates and aides were Uyghur and Uzbek intellectuals, who were also knowledgeable about the Middle East and Central Asia. For instance, Musa Ependi, who had studied medicine in Fergana, presided over the first hospital in Kashgar, and the Organization of the Red Crescent. A Uyghur intellectual, Qutluq Haji Shewqi, who had studied in Turkey and Egypt, became the president of the Eastern Turkistan Publishing House and chief editor of newspapers.[28] The ETR printing office cooperated with the Swedish press in Kashgar and published the newspaper *Sherqiy Türkistan Hayati* (*The Life of East Turkistan*), *Erkin Turkistan* (*Free Turkistan*), and *Yéngi Hayat* (*New Life*).[29]The Uzbek intellectual, Sofizade, who was editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine *Istiqlal* (*Independence*), was trained in Western Turkistan. Later he became the assistant minister of religious affairs and general secretary of the republic.[30] More than twenty Uzbek immigrant intellectuals who had studied in Western Turkistan (the Russian Turkistan region) served in different administrative positions in the Republic.[31]

Intellectuals from a diverse range of backgrounds also played important roles in drafting the constitution of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic and in writing up the declaration of state, and other related state programs. They were also influential in the establishment of diplomatic relations in a very short period of time and in the diplomatic activities of the republic. These nationalist Uyghur intellectuals, by paying attention to the political, social, economic, and cultural situation of Eastern Turkistan in the 1930s, and by taking into consideration different factors, including its external relations, followed a path of cooperation with all groups and powers that wanted and supported the land's independence.

3. The movement of national republicanism following the model of the Soviet Union.

Among the members of the Uyghur intellectual class in 1930s and 1940s, in addition to the people mentioned above, there was a group of intellectuals who were influenced by the national republican ideas of the Soviet Union.

The policies of the Soviet Union to divide the Muslim Turkic people of Central Asia and the Caucasus along ethnic borders and guide them to separate national republics started in 1924 and resulted in the formation of the republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan. This prompted a desire to establish a national republic among Uyghurs, as well. In addition, many of the important

and high-level members of the Uyghur intellectual class in the first half of the previous century had been in Central Asian republics. As a result of the ethnic policies of Soviet Russia, in the 1920s and 1930s a high number of Uyghur youths went to universities in Russian cities, including Moscow, Leningrad, Kazan, Baku, Samarqand, and Almaty, where they received advanced degrees. In the year of 1923 alone, more than 500 Uyghur students received education in Moscow, Leningrad, and other universities in Soviet Russia.[32]

The idea of a national liberation movement was propagated as far back as the Congress of the Revolutionary Uyghur Union in Tashkent in 1921. This was the first time that Uyghur intellectuals and nationalists from Eastern and Western Turkistan came together to establish an organization with a political program in order to provide for national liberation in the future.

For Abdulla Rozibaqiyev, a leader of the Uyghurs in Central Asia, the purpose of the congress was to train volunteers for the upcoming revolution in Xinjiang, and to educate people politically so that they could overthrow the Chinese occupiers and their local supporters. The national and political awakening of the Uyghurs in Central Asia resulted in their participation in the struggle to overthrow Chinese control and establish an independent country in their motherland. They sent many members to Xinjiang on a mission to get involved in underground political activities.[33]

Even the Third International and the Turkistan Communist Party introduced the idea of an independent republic in the Xinjiang region. The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, under Lenin's leadership, considered the idea of forming two republics, Kashgaria and Junggharia, as suggested by Latvian communist, Janis Rudzutaks, then chairman of the Turkistan Commission and of the Central Asia bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Russia Communist Party, but the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party ultimately rejected the proposal.[34] Later, however, the Moscow government and the Third International sent some clandestine agents to Xinjiang, and continued to investigate ways to foster a national liberation movement.

After the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the establishment of ethnically defined socialist republics in the former Tsarist Turkestan, teachers, and publications imported to Xinjiang reflected an outlook that was both influenced by communism and more strongly nationalistic.[35]

Many of the Uyghur intellectuals in leadership positions within these organizations, including Abdulla Rozibaqiyev, Ismail Tahirov, Burhan Qasimov, Abdulhey Muhemmedi and Nezerghoja Abdusemetov, Ershidin Hidayetov, and others, aimed to sustain the independence of the Uyghurs and to form an independent Uyghuristan. In the Tashkent congress, which was held on June 3, 1921, they decided to use the name "*Uyghur*" to replace the former "*Taranchi*" and "*Kashgars*" parties[36]. At the same time, they agreed on using the Ili dialect as the standard for modern Uyghur.

According to their aims, an independent Uyghuristan would naturally become a socialist independent national republic, similar to other republics in Soviet Central Asia. Some of activists in Turpan, Kashgar, and Ili who went to Soviet Russia and were connected with the Uyghur movement accepted the idea of an independent Uyghuristan and Uyghur nationalist ideals. Poet Abduxaliq, who was educated in Russia, adopted the term Uyghur and used it as his pen name—Abduxaliq Uyghur. He called his people the Uyghurs and rallied them to fight against Chinese rule and obtain freedom.[37] Abduxaliq was also among the from indigenous Xinjiang Turkic thinkers to ponder on Uyghur national interest[38] .

The idea of establishing Uyghuristan became part of an official revolutionary movement among the Uyghur people, as demonstrated by events at the Congress of Tashkent. The idea of Uyghuristan was not just an ideology promoted by politicians. It also turned out to be one of the most important political ideals promoted by intellectuals, writers, and poets.

After the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the period of Chinese warlord control over Xinjiang, several factors played an important role in the formation of Uyghur nationalism and political

identity, and of the Uyghurs' fight for self-determination and political rights. Ethnic oppression by Chinese warlords and especially their discriminatory policies toward the Uyghurs should be mentioned when addressing the formation of Uyghur nationalism. That the oppressed came together as a group to protect themselves and fight for self-rule was a natural consequence of this oppression. Indeed, during the years 1931-33, all the towns and cities in East Turkestan were up in arms against Chinese rulers. The culmination of those rebellions was the declaration of the establishment the Islamic Republic of East Turkistan on November 12, 1933. The establishment of the East Turkistan Islamic Republic was evidence of the formal birth of Uyghur nationalism and the realization of Uyghur national aspirations. Through the founding of this independent republic, the Uyghurs asserted their distinct national identity and showed their determination to control their own destiny.

In the beginning, the new republic was named the Republic of Uyghuristan, and it minted its first copper coins in the name of the "Republic of Uyghuristan."[39] Later on, the name was changed to the Republic of East Turkistan.[40] The short-lived Republic of East Turkistan (1933-1934) established and spread its own political platform and educational and socio-economic policies. It also established its own publishing house, which published newspapers, textbooks, and journals that freely spread nationalist ideology. Uyghur intellectuals in this period played an important role in the formation and strengthening of Uyghur nationalism with the goal of achieving an independent state outside Chinese control.

As the idea of a free Uyghuristan became the main goal of the national independence movement, Uyghur intellectuals and writers, through their own works, tried to bring together the people under that ideology, inviting them to join a common struggle for Uyghuristan. The theme of Uyghuristan was one of the most significant topics of Uyghur literature in the first years of Soviet Russia, and almost all Uyghur writers and poets wrote on this subject[41].

From 1933 to 1943, Sheng Shicai ruled Xinjiang with an iron fist. On Soviet advice and under their guidance, Sheng Shicai divided Xinjiang's population into fourteen ethnic groups. At the same time, he refused to recognize the Uyghurs or other ethnic groups any national autonomy or political rights, and suppressed their national aspirations, including demands for a Soviet-style republic. During the period of Sheng Shicai's control, some Uyghur leaders and intellectuals of the ETR believed that, with Soviet military, political, and economic support, Sheng Shicai promises would be realized and that they could participate in the provincial government.

The Soviet Union did not allow the formation of an independent state by the Uyghurs in the 1930s[42], but between 1934 and 1942, it sent experts and advisors to help the Xinjiang government in the fields of education, service, security, science and technology, and the military. Uyghur intellectuals were among these advisors. The Soviet Union also sent Uyghur intellectuals to Xinjiang in other overt, as well as covert, ways, and these people engaged in propaganda activities among the people. Sheng also promoted publications and education in languages other than Chinese, although, as in the Soviet Union, the main intent of the literacy program was to extend the reach of propaganda. He promoted agricultural recovery, and constructed schools, roads, and medical facilities.[43] Sheng's rule had strong overtones of Chinese chauvinism, triggering a new wave of nationalism among Uyghurs.

As declared in a report by the Central Asian Military District's intelligence division in the Soviet Union about the situation Xinjiang Province in December 1935: "Meanwhile the Uyghur nationalist movement is growing. The idea of an independent Uyghuristan continues to occupy an important place in the minds of Uighur leaders, even those who are adherents of Urpra[44]… In spite of an increase in pay, the army receives paltry supplies."[45]

The Soviet Union benefited from the Uyghur intellectual class in accordance with its own interests, and by helping them it managed to reach its goals of spreading Soviet influence and promoting the national ideas of Lenin and Stalin in particular. The main propagandists for these views were either Uyghurs from the Soviet Union or

Uyghurs from Eastern Turkistan who had studied or lived in the Soviet Union.

Between 1934 and 1942, the Soviet Union was able to penetrate Xinjiang in the fields of culture and education, science and technology, and ideology, and included this region in its own sphere of influence. Reciprocally, the influence of the Soviet Union among Uyghurs, especially among Uyghur intellectuals, further increased. The desire of the Uyghurs to compare themselves with neighboring Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and other republics, and their willingness to have the right to establish the Republic of Uyghuristan was strengthened.

4. Intellectual component of Second East Turkistan Republic

Between 1944 and 1949, a second national independence movement was launched in Xinjiang province. On November 12, 1944, the Eastern Turkistan Republic was founded in Ghulja. Uyghur sources officially called it *Sherqiy Türkistan Jumhuriyiti* or *Azat Sherqiy Türkistan Jumhuriyiti* (The Liberated East Turkistan Republic).[46] In Russian, it was called *Vostochno-Turkestanskaya Respublika*, abbreviated to *VTR.* [47] Chinese sources called this republic *Dong Tuerqisitan Renmin Gonghegu* (East Turkestan Peoples Republic),[48] or the *Dong Tuerqisitan Gongheguo* (East Turkistan Republic).[49]

Between that time and the end of 1949, the government of this republic liberated the three districts of Altay, Tarbaghatay, and Ili, and formed an independent state in this region. Uyghur intellectuals again played a leadership role during the five-year history of the Eastern Turkistan government and during the political struggles for national independence for Uyghurs in the 1940s.

The ETR government announced a nine-point declaration that, prepared by Uyghur intellectual Ehmetjan Qasimi and others on January 5, 1945, established the ETR as an independent republic that would treat all religions and peoples equally by embracing democracy and rejecting totalitarianism. The new republic called for the development of education, technology, communications, industry, social welfare, and a free health care system.[50]

The ETR established various social and education organizations such as a women's association, a veterans' foundation, and schools for orphans. Women from Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups participated in military, government, education, and work structures equally with men. The goal of the state's battle was not to establish an independent Islamic religious state but to develop and learn from European modern culture, including the culture of the Soviet Union.

The state held close relations with Uyghurs in the Soviet Union. The population of East Turkistan long had close ethnic, cultural, and economic ties with the Soviet Central Asian Republics, and Soviet influence had been strong among the local people of East Turkistan. Russian-Soviet culture exerted a dominant influence among the local population, via the Russian, Tatar, Uzbek, and Uyghur populations that had migrated from Soviet Russia in the early 1920s and 1930s. Immigrant intellectuals and intellectuals who had spent time in the Soviet Union constituted the majority of the ruling class of the Eastern Turkistan Republic. Almost all of them were influenced by the Soviet Union, and most of them were under the influence of ideals of national republicanism and self–determination for ethnic groups.

The first members of the government and the cabinet of the republic were, just like in the first Eastern Turkistan Republic, the people who stayed or studied abroad, especially those who were trained in Soviet Russia. The president of the republic, Elihan Töre, had lived in Soviet Russia until the 1930s and achieved advanced levels of religious education in places like Bukhara and Saudi Arabia. He thus had a broad knowledge of religious studies and of the natural sciences, as well as good rhetorical skills.[51] He shared many of the same ideas with the intellectuals who had attempted to establish an independent Eastern Turkistan Republic in the 1930s.

A member of the government and the secretary of health, Qasimjan Qembiri, had graduated from the college for nationalities in Tashkent.[52] The secretary of education, Hebib Yunuchi, had studied in universities in Russia, Turkey, and Germany.[53] His aide, who later became secretary of

education, Seyfidin Ezizi, had graduated from Central Asian University of Tashkent.[54] The secretary of propaganda and member of the government, Abdukerim Abbasof, had graduated from the Xinjiang Institute in Ürümchi. The secretary of the treasury, Enwer Musabayof, had studied in Turkey.[55] The assistant secretary of the treasury, Waqqas Mirshanof, had received his higher education in Germany. The secretary of military affairs and assistant general secretary, famous leader of the Ili government Ehmetjan Qasimi, was trained in Moscow and had a PhD in history, thus taking his place as one of the first scholars with a PhD among Uyghurs.[56]

Among the people who organized the liberation movement in Tarbaghatay were Ablimit Hajiyof, who had graduated from the Central Asian University of Tashkent, and other intellectuals who had graduated from the Xinjiang Institute and from the Military School in Ürümchi.

In addition, many intellectuals served in leadership positions within the different ministries of the republic, as well as in newspapers, in the Ili Gymnasium, and in other positions. Many of them had graduated from schools including the Central Asian University of Tashkent, the Ili Gymnasium of Ghulja, Xinjiang Institute of Ürümchi, and various teaching academies. Almost all the intellectuals centered in Ili, Chochek, and Altay worked in the Eastern Turkistan Government as its employees.

In the final years of the Ili government, especially between 1947 and 1949, the higher echelons of the government leadership consisted of intellectuals who had been trained in the Soviet Union. When the "Union for the Protection of Democracy and Peace" was formed in August 1948 in order to lead the national liberation movement in all of Xinjiang province, the central committee of the "Union" had 35 members, most of them intellectuals. The Central Leadership-Organizing Committee of the Union had eleven members from five ethnic groups, and ten of them were educated in the Soviet Union. They included Ehmetjan Qasimi (president), who had a PhD in history from Moscow, Is'haqbek Munonof (commander -in–chief), who had studied in Osh and Frunze, Esihet Is'haqof, Enwerhan Baba, and Uyghur Sayrani, all of whom had studied in Moscow, as well as graduates of the Central Asian University of Tashkent, including, Seyfidin Ezizi, Ablimit Hajiyof, and Ibrahim Turdi graduated from Samarkand Agricultural College.[57] Almost all the leaders in all departments of the "Union" had been educated in the Soviet Union, or in Urumchi and in Ghulja. In the various city and town branches of this organization, and in its military committees, intellectuals formed a majority.

These intellectuals had common viewpoints about issues such as the future of Eastern Turkistan and its self-determination, and they hoped that if independence were impossible, they could nonetheless follow the Soviet Union as an allied republic with equal rights.

The next leader of the Ili government, Ehmetjan Qasimi, who was a modern intellectual, had broad knowledge and a good understanding of the international system and of regional political issues. He supported the national republican ideas of the Soviet Union. These two leaders gave importance to the role of intellectuals and brought those intellectuals into their fold. They appointed these intellectuals to leadership positions in their governments. The republican government, under the leadership of Elihan Töre, mentioned in its nine-point declaration of statehood that the republic aimed to provide progress in the fields of culture, education, health, the arts, and other fields.

The ETR had a secular and multi-ethnic state system.[58] This republic brought together groups of different religious beliefs, diverse ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds, including Uyghur, Kazakh, Mongghul, Hui, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Shibo, and Russian. It protected the rights of these groups and provided for their unity, and it determined accurate policies and strategies in order to defeat the powerful and common enemy.

During its five years, the Ili government devoted the state budget to multi-language education and published eleven newspapers and five magazines in five languages. News organs and the press in Ürümchi and Ili embarked upon a propaganda war, each side accusing the other bad faith.[59] Newspapers like "Revolutionary East Turkistan," the journal for Uyghur youth "The Struggle,"

"The Union" and others were busy propagating the successes of the Soviet style governance in the fields of education, culture, economy and bringing up constantly the questions of the ethnic national questions, the national liberation and self-determination and questions of international politics. Newspapers and magazines in the territory of the ETR played an important role for the development of culture and the political understanding of the people. The ideas and principles of self-determination, the victory of Soviet style ethnicities policies, the policies of the Uyghur national liberation movement and alike were discussed by leading intellectuals like Ehmetjan Qasimi and others.

Uyghur intellectuals, including leaders of the Ili government, namely Elihan Töre, Ehmetjan Qasimi, Abdukerim Abbasof, and others, frequently published articles on national liberation movements, ethnic and socio-economic policies, and on the political and cultural history of East Turkistan and the other various issues. Newspapers and magazines in the territory of the ETR played an important role for the development of culture and the political understanding of the people.

In the determination of these policies and strategies, intellectuals played an important role. From its very beginning, the government of Eastern Turkistan put an extraordinary emphasis on education, the emergence of a class of intellectuals, and their empowerment. In line with this, the government of the Eastern Turkistan Republic adapted a policy of free, compulsory education. In Ili, mid-level experts were trained, and vocational schools established, such as *Ili Bilim Yurti (*Ili Institute of Learning*)* and *Tibbiy Mektep* (Medical Nursing Training School). Ili also attempted to promote four-year, seven-year, and ten-year long courses of study. In 1945 and 1946, there were 295 schools in the Ili region, more than 980 classrooms, 1051 teachers, and 28343 students. In 1947, the number of students increased 24 percent. It increased 25 percent in 1948, and in 1949, it further rose 30 percent. In 1950, it increased 41 percent.[60] The economic situation of the students in Ili was better than it was for students in Ürümchi under the rule of the Kuomintang, and the level of education was as well.

From its first day in office, the government of the Eastern Turkistan Republic also attached importance to the training of military officers. Between February 1945 and 1949, it established basic and mid-level institutes to train military offices in different regions, including in Qorghas, in Mongghulküre, and in Shixo. Between 1946 and 1949, the command headquarters of the national army established a national army military academy in Ghulja and trained three generations of mid-level officers.[61] The military academy of the national army was a complete military institute, and its curriculum was taken from the high-level military academies in the Soviet Union.[62]

In its short five years of existence, the Eastern Turkistan Republic (or Ili government) emerged from nothingness and managed to establish independence, a flag of state, a regular army, state institutions, law and regulations, and other necessities of statehood. Thanks to its accomplishments in the fields of the military, politics, economy, culture, and education, it thereby created an example of self-determination for the Uyghurs in the 20th century. The intellectuals had common viewpoints about issues such as the future of Eastern Turkistan and its self-determination, and they hoped that if independence were impossible, that they could follow the Soviet Union as an allied republic with equal rights.

5. The idea of high-level autonomy based on the ideology of Turkism?

Between 1944 and 1949, when the territories of Xinjiang were divided and ruled by the Eastern Turkistan Republic government (after 1946, Ili government or three districts government), which was based in three districts, and the Xinjiang provincial government that was based in Ürümchi, some Turkic intellectuals in Ürümchi, who were trained and travelled in Muslim countries of the Middle East and to Turkey, including Dr. Mesud Sabri, Muhemmed Imin Bughra, Eysa Aliptekin, Qurban Qoday, and Abliz Chinggizxan, engaged in a fierce battle with the intellectuals of the Eastern Turkistan Republic, including Ehmetjan Qasimi, Rehimjan Sabir Haji, Seyfidin Ezizi, and Abdukerim Abbasof, who accepted the influ-

ence of Soviet Union. Among these groups, proponents of the ideas of the Ili faction, including the leaders of the Eastern Turkistan Republic, were labeled as "radicals," whereas proponents of the "*Üch Ependi*" (three misters) in Ürümchi were called "conservatives" by Zhang Zhizhong, Chairman of coalition provincial government in 1946-1947. [63]

Although they had a common final goal, their disagreement on which external power to use temporarily created a major rift between them. Intellectuals referred to as "*üch ependi,*" namely Mesud Sabri, Muhemmed Imin Bughra, and Eysa Yusuf Aliptekin, preferred to negotiate with the Chinese Kuomintang government, through which hey were planned to gain rights to a high-level of autonomy[64] within China and to reform the Chinese constitution in order to change the name Xinjiang to Turkistan. They were against the nationalities policies of the Soviet Union, which paved the way for a division of territories and for classifying groups as Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek, and were in favor of a common Turkic national ideology. Because they were against the Soviet Union, they were more favorably disposed toward the central government of China. They also were supportive of countries like the United States, Britain, and Turkey during the Cold War, and promoted the idea of cooperation with these countries.

On the other hand, intellectuals of Ili under the leadership Ehmetjan Qasimi were in favor of an armed insurrection, with backing from the Soviet Union, in order to determine the future of East Turkistan. These intellectuals opposed the Kuomintang government of China.

China and Soviets benefited from this division among Uyghurs in their diplomatic battles and sacrificed them for their own interests, never allowing the Uyghur intellectuals from these two factions to unite. In the end, as a result of the political changes in the world and in China in 1949, neither group had been able to achieve their goals, which included independence, forming an allied republic with the Soviet Union, or established an autonomous republic with higher autonomy in the Chinese state. Neither western-oriented nationalist China nor Soviet-oriented communist China gave them their desired autonomous rights. After being divided between the Soviet Union and the West during the Cold War, both groups of Uyghur intellectuals ultimately lost influence.

Conclusion

In the first half of the 20th century, a Uyghur intellectual class whose members were trained in modern schools, witnessed a phase of new development. The formation and development of Uyghur intellectuals took place in a broad region, including Central Asia, Turkey, the Middle East and Eastern Turkistan/Xinjiang. Although these intellectuals lived in different regions of the world, had citizenship of different states, and were under the influence of different ideologies, they always thought of themselves in relation to their Uyghur national identity and the territorial identity of Eastern Turkistan.

During their emergence and development, they were influenced by different ideological currents, including communism, Turkism, and Islamism, and they tried to apply these theories to the Uyghur independence movement. Intellectuals played prominent roles in two Republics of Eastern Turkistan. The leadership cadres of these states were formed by these intellectuals. And they also constituted the core of the government and the military.

Especially during the National Liberation Movement of 1944-1949, the role of intellectuals was further consolidated, and the government that lasted for five years was administered by Uyghur intellectuals. The first Eastern Turkistan Republic was abolished by the Soviet Union. Although the second Eastern Turkistan Republic or Ili Government was supported and protected by the Soviet Union, at the end of the day, it became a victim of the Soviet Union, as well.

The Soviets again used of the dreams of liberation of Uyghur intellectuals in the Soviet Union and Xinjiang to pursue its own national interests in the 1940s, especially after the Chinese nationalist government began cooperating with the United States and the British, and both countries opened consulates in Ürümchi. Soviets used Uyghur intellectuals to publish the monthly Uyghur magazine *Sherq Heqiqiti* in Tashkent and *Qazaq*

Eli in Almaata and sent them to Xinjiang. The Soviets also sent some Uyghur intellectuals to the East Turkistan Republic as political, military, and administrative advisors. Within this environment, the Soviet Union supported and re-energized the independence struggle of the Uyghurs and other native peoples in Xinjiang province in order to establish its own influence in the region and dislodge the influence of the United States and Great Britain from this corner of Central Asia.

The role and involvement of the Soviet Union in the ETR and Xinjiang's political life in 1944-49 was not reflected in the works of Soviet Russian historians until after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This was due primarily to the closed nature of the archival materials that were able to shed light on these issues. During the Cold War period almost all Western scholars who studied Sino-Soviet relations and Xinjiang, using some Chinese and Western diplomatic sources, concluded that the Soviet Union was deeply involved and played a key role in the establishment of the ETR and its military, political, economic, and other activities.[65] But, they could not clarify their points with information from original Soviet documents. However, after the mid-1990s, when Russian scholars started to open the archive documents relating to the Soviets involvement in the ETR, it was possible to shed light on the fact that the developments were part of the Soviets' preconceived plan.

According to secret Soviet archives that were opened after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Stalin's politburo decided to organize and support the national liberation movements in Xinjiang province.[66] Until July 1946, high-level Soviet political and military advisers came from Moscow and regularly stayed in Ghulja, providing aid to the ETR.[67] More than 2000 soldiers and 500 officers from the Red Army served in the National Army of the ETR,[68] which numbered 30,000 soldiers.

The struggle for independence grew nationwide, and the Chinese Kuomintang government in Urumqi faced the possibility of defeat. At such a critical time, Stalin forced the East Turkestan leadership to compromise and negotiate with the Chinese Kuomintang government.

After nearly eight months of negotiation under intense pressure from Moscow, a coalition government was established in July of 1946 under which the Uyghurs and the Chinese would share political power. The coalition government collapsed within a year, and the Ili National army resumed fighting against Chinese forces. The Soviet Union never planned, however, to occupy Xinjiang or to establish an independent state on Xinjiang territory.[69] Instead, in the 1940s, the Soviet Union only used the dream of independence and freedom of Uyghur intellectuals for its own national interests. According to Abdurewup Mexsum Ibrayimi, the General Secretary of the ETR in 1944-46, the Soviet Consuls and Generals, promised help to members of the Liberation Organization in the establishment of an independent state like Mongolia, but after October of 1945 they refused to help. "In the end, Stalin sold the ETR to communist China. The Soviets cheated us," said Mr. Ibrayimi.[70]

Different ideas among Uyghur intellectuals, including establishing an independent state, attaining higher autonomy, or accepting the Soviet model and forming an allied or autonomous republic, completely failed in the end. There were domestic and external reasons for this. Different ideas and disagreements among intellectuals were related to the destiny of their own people. Each faction claimed that its ways and methods were best. At the same time, Uyghur intellectuals on both sides of the border in Soviet Central Asia and Xinjiang became victims of the purges of Stalin and Sheng Shicai in 1937-38, and the new Uyghur intellectual elites that emerged in the 1930s were destroyed by the dictators of that period.

Almost all Soviet Uyghur intellectuals that supported the establishment of a Republic of Uyghuristan became victims of Stalinism. Meanwhile, the intellectuals from the Eastern Turkistan National Liberation Movement, who depended on the support of the Soviet Union, and of pro-Three Misters (*üch ependichi*), and intellectuals, based in Ürümchi, who relied on the support of nationalist China, refused and rejected each other's views, despite their mutual desire to achieve independence. China claimed that the first stage of the ETR and its president, Elihan Töre and the

"Three Misters" in Ürümchi, had pan-Turkist or Pan-Islamic aims.

The division of the Uyghur intellectual class in the 20th century was a reflection of international and regional ideological and political competition in Eastern Turkistan and among the Uyghurs. The leadership of the first Eastern Turkistan Republic was formed by the individuals who were influenced by the Turkism and Islamist awakening movements, which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, but their statist ideology based on Turkism turned out to be a victim of the complicated external and internal political situation in Eastern Turkistan and Central Asia, as well as of the conflict of interests and power struggles between the great powers. The intellectuals and leaders of the first republic were eliminated by the Soviet Union and its Chinese proxy Sheng Shicai. Their defeat was a loss felt by generations of Uyghurs.

After 1946, the new dream of some Uyghur Intellectuals and Ili leaders, including founders of the People's Revolutionary Party, such as Abdukerim Abbasof and others after 1949—those who believed the Chinese communists' earlier promises of self-determination for national minorities—was that the PRC would establish Soviet-style republics.

Among Uyghur intellectuals and former ETR (East Turkistan Republic) officials the ideas of Soviet-style republics within the newly built Chinese People's Republic was very much alive in 1951. But until the death of Stalin in 1953, China did not pronounce clearly its position on what type of governance it would accord to Uyghurs - whether it would be a Soviet style union or an Autonomous republic on its own. Therefore, among former cadres of ETR and intellectuals, there was a desire to copy the Soviet style unification with China. At a 1951 conference in Ghulja city, the former seat of government of ETR, a group of Uyghur leaders proposed the establishment of a "Republic of Uyghuristan" with the capacity to regulate all its internal affairs.[71] According to a former high level official of ETR, in March of 1951 in Ghulja city, the 51 ex-high officials and intellectuals of ETR gathered together for a special reunion conference on which they demanded the creation of the "Uyghuristan Autonomous Republic" from the PRC. In their submitted program they indicated the delegation of the exterior diplomatic, military powers of the said Autonomous Republic to Chinese government but have reserved the creation of its national army for domestic use, indicated self-governance and control over its wealth and trade.[72] Even some of the former ETR cadres and intellectuals based in Ürümchi and Kashgar took part in this petition. And although, later in April-May, 1951 it was heavily condemned by the first conference of all nationalities of Xinjiang.[73] But, in history this event remained as a "conference of 51"[74] or "the movement of 51."

In the end, however, Mao didn't recognize the right to self-determination of the Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongols, or others. Chinese leaders justified their choice by explaining that China's situation was different from that in the Soviet Union. In 1955, two years after Stalin's death, Mao Zedong passed over Stalin's ethnic autonomous republic policy for the Uyghurs, a system some Uyghurs had hoped he would follow, and decided instead to establish regional autonomy in the province, renaming the area the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Many former ETR leaders and intellectuals looked to the leadership of this autonomous region with new dreams.

Uyghur intellectuals advocating for the establishment of the Uyghuristan Republic within the PRC in Xinjiang after 1950 were repressed by Chinese Communists.[75]

After the Qingdao meeting in 1957, at which Chinese premier Zhou Enlai strongly criticized former ETR Uyghur nationalists, some Uyghur nationalists immigrated to Soviet Central Asia. Some of them died or were assaulted during the Cultural Revolution.

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[1] Special thanks go to Kara Abramson for her extensive assistance and editing of this paper.

[2] According to Abduraxman Abdulla, Sheng Shicai sent a total of 307 students to the Central Asian University, including 146 Uyghurs, 84 Han Chinese, 30 Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, 5 Tatars, 4 Uzbeks and Tajik, 16 Hui, and 12 Mongols. See *Tashkentchiler*, (Ürümchi: Shinjang Xelq Neshiriyati, 2002), p. 2. According to Ablimit Hajiyof, a former student at the Central Asian University, Sheng Shicai sent 300 students from 13

ethnic groups in Xinjiang to the Central Asian University. Also the Xinjiang provincial government and agricultural and health departments separately sent 10 students each to Samarkand Agricultural Institute and another 10 each to the College of Animal Husbandry and Agricultural in Alma-Ata. Most of them were Uyghurs. Sheng Shicai sent 14 students to study at medical college in Tashkent. In addition, many students were sent to Moscow, Tashkent, and other cities supported by funding from their families. See *Shéng Shiseyning 1930-yillarda Sowét ittipaqigha Oqughuchi Ewetkenliki Heqqide Eslime* (*Memoir About Sheng Shica's Sending Students to Soviet Union in 1930s*), (Shinjang Tarixi Matériyalliri, 1989, v.27)

[3] Abdulla Talip. *Uyghur Maarip Tarixidin Ochériklar* (*Record of the History of Uyghur Education*) 1986. Ürümchi, Shinjang xelq neshiriyati. http://www.uyghurweb.net/Uy/ATALIP.pdf. p.49

[4] Musa Türkistani, *Türkistan Pajiesi* (*Tragedy of Turkestan*). 2009. Istanbul. Sutuq Bughraxan Maarip Neshriyati. P.19.

[5] The young Bukharians and its organization was a Jadid secret society founded in Bukhara in 1909. The main goal of the Young Bukharians was to establish a democratic republic system in Bukhara. After 1918 this organization broke into two parts, some of them pro-communist, some of them anti-communists and anti-Soviet power. The Red Army took Bukhara after which the pro-communist Young Bukharians formed the first government of the Bukharian People's Soviet Republic and in 1924 joined the leadership of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

[6] The Young Khivans organization was established in Khiva in 1912. Young Khivans had almost the same ideology, goal, and destiny as the Young Bukharians.

[7] *Musa Türkistani*, 2009, p.109

[8] Ibid. p. 28

[9] Ahat Andican (2003) "Turkestan's Struggle Abroad," *Jadidism to Independence*, SOTA publication: Haarlem, Netherlands, pp. 41-47

[10] H. B. Paksoy (1991) Basmachi: Turkistan National Liberation Movement (1916-1930s), Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union (FL: Academic International Press) 1991, Vol. 4, pp. 5–20.

[11] Mirehmet Seyit, and Yalqun Rozi. *Memtili Ependi* (Mr. Memtili), (Ürümchi: Shinjang Uniwérsitéti Neshriyati 1997), pp. 182-185

[12] Abduqadir Haji. *1933-1937 Yilighiche Qeshqer, Xoten, Aqsularda Bolup Ötken Weqeler* ("Events of 1933-1937 in Kashgar, Khoten and Aksu"), *Xinjiang Tarixi Matériyalliri* (Xinjiang Historical Materials), No. 17 (Ürümchi: Xinjiang Xelq Neshiriyati,1986), pp. 66-67.

[13] James A. Milliward (2007) Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang, New York: Columbia University Press, p.201.

[14] Andrew D.W. Forbes, (1986) Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political history of Republican Sinkiang 1911-1949, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.114

[15] Abduqadir Haji, 1986, pp.66-68. *Musa Turkistani,* pp.

[16] Seyfidin Ezizi, *Ömür Dastani* (Poem of Life) Volume 1. (Beijing . Milletler Neshiriyati 1990) P. 397 . Mirehmet Seyit , and Yalqun Rozi. 1997, p.181

[17] Millward, 2007, p. 203.

[18] Muhemmed Imin Bughra. *Sherqiy Türkistan Tarixi* (History of East Turkestan). Ankara: 1998. P.400-402 Mirehmet Seyit, and Yalqun Rozi. 1997. P.182-186

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[21] Millward, 2007, p. 203.

[22] Shirip Hushtar, 2000, pp. 254-256.

[23] Shirip Hushtar, 2000, pp.278-279.

[24] See, Musa Türkistani, 2009, , p. 109.

[25] Shinmen Yasushi. 1994, pp. 7-9, 15. Shirip Hushtar, 2000. pp.190-191

[26] Mirehmet Seyit and Yalqun Rozi , p. 217

[27] Ibid. pp. 212-253. See also the personal interview with Seley Haji Artishi, student of Memet Eli Tewpiq in 1933-1936. According to him, Tewpiq taught many poems about Uyghuristan. One of them is "*Uyghuristan baliliribiz"* (We are sons of Uyghuristan). Personal interview ,Octeber,2008.

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[31] Musa Türkistani.2009. p.109

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[54] Seyfidin Ezizi, *ömür Dastani* (Poem of Life).1990,Milletler Neshiryati, Beijing. p.421-469.

[55] Shirip Hushtar. Volume 2. 2003. p.205

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