LIMPING ON TWO LEGS: UYGHUR DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PROSPECTS FOR EASTERN TURKESTAN INDEPENDENCE

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Introduction

"Walking on two legs" (*liangtiaotui zoulu*), that is trying to promote two policies, often contradictory, at the same time, is a Chinese political term and as such may not be very popular among Uyghurs. Nonetheless, it is the best expression I can use to define the current state of the Eastern Turkestan independence movement—in a positive, rather than a negative sense. Apparently, this expression denotes a split or a break. Indeed, the Uyghur Diaspora has been divided into a number of organizations and associations that have been established throughout the years, especially since the early 1990s. They held a number of congresses and other meetings and managed to place the issue of Eastern Turkestan independence on the international agenda using advanced communications media, petitions and demonstrations and personal activism. Yet, their actual success has been quite limited primarily—but by no means only—due to repeated splits and internal rivalries. Attempts to create a universal, acceptable, representative and powerful organization that would provide an umbrella for all the other particular associations and that would have an international impact and a recognized world leader (similar to the Dalai Lama), had by and large failed.

This situation was supposed to have changed in April 2004 when a new umbrella organization called the World Uyghur Congress was formed. It was meant to unite the different Uyghur communities and associations all over the world under one unified, recognized and acceptable leadership, something the movement lacked after the death of its lifelong Isa Yusuf Alptekin in 1995, if not before. Just a few months later, however, in September 2004, another umbrella organization emerged in Washington: the Republic of East Turkistan Government in Exile. Since then, the Eastern Turkestan nationalist movement has been "walking on two legs," and perhaps more—since not all Uyghur associations throughout the world joined either of these new organizations. Moreover, during my meetings with expatriate Uyghurs in 2004-2005 I could sense the tension between the followers of these two "headquarters" that seemingly opted for two different solutions in addressing the Eastern Turkestan independence problem. While the former is ready to compromise and settle for democracy and self-determination (explicitly) and increased autonomy (implicitly), the latter would not accept anything less than complete independence. This bifurcation has again reminded me of another typical Chinese term,

"struggle between two lines" (*liangtiao luxian douzheng*) such as "right" and "wrong," "correct" and "incorrect," "advanced" and "backward." Is this ideological, political and organizational split harmful for the Eastern Turkestan nationalist cause, as many believe? Are these two organizations mutually exclusive? Is one solution better than the other in promoting the Uyghur nationalist cause? In this article, after providing some background, I try to answer these questions and to introduce an outsider's perspective on the prospects of the two-headed Uyghur nationalist movement based on a provisional analysis and compared, in a preliminary way, to other national liberation movements.[1]

[1] Research for this paper and meetings with expatriate Uyghurs were facilitated by a MacArthur Foundation grant, No. 02-76170-000-GSS, on "Uyghur Expatriate Communities: Domestic, Regional and International Challenges," for which I am grateful.

I

While its origins go back to the mid-18th century when the region known since then as Xinjiang had been occupied by China's Qing Dynasty, what is known today as the Uyghur Diaspora has been gradually created since the late 19th century when members of a Muslim-Turkic nationality, later known as Uyghurs, escaped from the bloody Hui (Muslim) rebellions in Xinjiang and began to settle in Russian Central Asia.[2] Following the Russian Revolution Uyghurs began migrating to other countries, mainly to Turkey and to Saudi Arabia. In addition to Central Asia—where the majority of the Uyghur Diaspora is still located—smaller Uyghur communities are now scattered all over the world. Suppressed at home by the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Eastern Turkestan national independence movement had begun to take shape outside China by the mid-20th century, led first by Mehmet Emin Bughra and, after his death in 1964, by Isa Yusuf Alptekin. Based in Turkey, both, but especially the latter, should be credited for having done their best to keep the quest of Eastern Turkestan independence alive, though they had achieved little else. In spite of their efforts, writings and frequent meetings with international leaders and organizations, Uyghur communities, both inside and outside China, have never been regarded by the media, the public and academics, as a national liberation movement that has the right for self-determination. This was odd, to say the least, given the two most significant international phenomena of the 1960s: Asian-African decolonization processes and the hostility toward the Chinese by both West and East. Under those circumstances, the Western world, as well as the Islamic countries and the Soviet Union should have shared a common interest in underwriting the Uyghur cause and in supporting the goal of Eastern Turkestan independence, each for its own reasons. But they did not. Except for a few ineffective statements by Third World leaders and the Soviet manipulation of Central Asian Uyghurs against China, practically nothing was done to actually promote Eastern Turkestan national independence until the 1980s. Why? Is this failure an outcome of subjective Uyghur shortcomings or of objective international constraints? As it turned out, both were responsible.

To begin with, the world situation was not conducive to upholding Eastern Turkestan independence in those years. Isolated from the two superpowers, and from most of the international community including the United Nations and international organizations, China was practically and paradoxically immune to external pressure. There were no ways to penalize the Chinese for their harsh ethnic policy; to compel them to improve their behavior or to reward them if they did. Also, for all the hos-

[2] See: K. Hodong, *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877*, Stanford, 2004.

tility against China and Chinese revolutionary radicalism, Beijing's sovereignty over Xinjiang has never been officially contested or challenged even by those governments that had withheld their diplomatic recognition of the PRC. Needless to say, all other governments—without exception—that legally recognized the PRC, have by implication and simultaneously always recognized Xinjiang as an integral part of China—and they still do. Moreover, Beijing used to be the self-proclaimed champion of national liberation movements throughout the world, especially in the 1960s, and it would have been very difficult at that time to cast the Chinese as colonialists themselves. Also, in those years the West, and definitely the Soviet Union, were not terribly interested in human rights violation, in religious persecution or in separatist activities. Basically, besides remote academic circles, little was known about Uyghurs, their history, culture and their obscure nationalist claims. Indeed, mainstream modern China studies had just begun to emerge and the communications media were limited and hardly accessible to many so that the East Turkestan nationalist message—if there was any at all—could not be delivered to a widespread audience.

However, these objective constraints provide only one half of the explanation for the weakness of the Eastern Turkestan national movement in those years. Headquartered in Turkey, the "movement" consisted of few organizations with even fewer links to other groups, primarily those active in Soviet Central Asia. To some extent, the low-key operation and standing of the Eastern Turkestan independence movement abroad was a reflection of Beijing's low-key response to Uyghur national separatism at home. Having crushed the surviving remnants of Eastern Turkestan rebels in the early 1950s and having largely "pacified the west" (*anxi*) thereafter,[3] Beijing did not treat Uyghur separatism as a serious threat at least until the 1980s. To be sure, there were a number of violent confrontations, especially in the early 1960s; however, the so-called Eastern Turkestan nationalist movement was at best a local nuisance, if at all. If Beijing was aware of external dimensions of Eastern Turkestan separatism, they were overlooked. In those years the problem of the movement was not that it had one leg or two legs but that it had no legs at all.

II

Many of these constraints were removed since the early 1980s. Most important, since Mao's death Beijing adopted an Open Door policy that has led to a greater interaction with the international community, to active participation in international organizations and to a greater exposure to international norms—for the first time in its history. At the same time, China began to increase its pressure on nationalities so as to guarantee its continued control of the periphery even, and especially, under the new conditions of "openness." Under these circumstances, Uyghur identities (ethnic, political, social, religious, economic, international, etc.) in general and "Uyghur separatism" in particular, have become a primary target for this ongoing crackdown, unprecedented even in Mao's time. In fact, some of my expatriate Uyghur colleagues admitted that Mao's treatment of Uyghurs, while by no means being positive, had still been more decent and fair compared to Deng Xiaoping's. An interesting research on Chinese ethnic historiography that is still under way at the University of Haifa tries to provide an explanation. It appears that in Mao's time Uyghurs had been considered a *legitimate* minority nationality separate from the Han, and had been treated as such. Post-Mao Beijing, however, has been treating Uyghurs as an *illegitimate* nationality that should be incorporated into "China" and the Han. This is evident in the way non-Han nationalities are portrayed in official Chinese textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s, compared to the 1980s and 1990s. Therefore, Uyghur persecution—that had been resumed

[3] See: *Xinjiang pingpan jiaofei* (The Suppression of Bandits in Xinjiang), ed. by Zh. Yuxi, Urumqi, 2000.

in the 1980s—has increased by China following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Central Asian republics as independent entities in the early 1990s. Also, Beijing's harsh ethnic policy has begun to attract the attention of the international community. Western governments, parliaments, the United Nations and NGOs—that have become more aware of human rights violations and nondemocratic practices in general—have now turned to and focused on China. This increased Uyghur persecution at home—and the new opportunities that emerged abroad—have led to the awakening of the vision of Eastern Turkestan independence and to the creation of a number of organizations and associations aimed at promoting this vision.

Loosely coordinated, these Diaspora organizations have time and again tried to create a headquarters that would formulate goals and policies acceptable to all. This proved difficult not only because of internal disagreements but also because the conditions in the host countries have deteriorated and become inhospitable—thereby undermining Uyghur attempts to promote their national cause effectively. Consequently, whereas most expatriate Uyghur "troops" have largely remained in their host countries, the headquarters of Eastern Turkestan nationalism has gradually and inevitably shifted farther away to the west—beyond China's reach—to host countries that not only *passively* displayed sympathy but could also translate passive sympathy to *active* support of the Uyghur cause.

III

Located in Central Asia, the first Eastern Turkestan nationalities and organizations—that had become gradually Russified anyway over the years—were from the very beginning subordinated to Soviet interests—determined less by any identification with Uyghur (or Kazakh) nationalism and much more by Moscow's territorial aspirations and its conflict with China. For these reasons, in the 1960s and 1970s Moscow exploited Uyghur nationalism and provided the Central Asian Uyghur communities and organizations with facilities aimed at undermining China (such as radio broadcasts and even military training). However, once the conflict was over and China has begun its upsurge as a major economic, political and military power, Moscow, and the newly independent Central Asian governments—now considerably weakened—have substantially adjusted to Beijing's policy by condemning "the three evils," namely Uyghur "separatism," Islamic "radicalism" and "terrorism." As Chinese economic, political and military influence over Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan has begun to grow consistently, local Uyghur organizations—traditionally more militant than those in the West—have been facing considerable restrictions, hardships and persecution. Representing some 350,000-400,000 of their kin—the overwhelming majority of the Uyghur Diaspora—these organizations found it difficult, occasionally next to impossible, to operate, let alone to provide a universal leadership. It is under these circumstances that the center of Eastern Turkestan nationalism has gradually shifted westward to Turkey.

In fact, first the Ottoman Empire and then Turkey had become an inspiration and a model for Eastern Turkestani pursuit of cultural and political independence already since the late 19th century and a center for nationalist activism already since the early 1950s, if not before. Uyghur publications and organizations had prospered in Turkey which from the very beginning offered shelter, sanctuary and encouragement to hundreds and thousands of Uyghur refugees who had fled China either directly or indirectly. Hostile to China at that time, Ankara identified with the Uyghurs' plight, and with their vision of an independent homeland in Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang), not only in the two decades before 1971—when it established diplomatic relations with the PRC—but even afterwards. The government provided the movement with office facilities, material and moral support and even funds and a

number of Turkish statesmen, politicians and officials supported the Uyghur cause in public. One of them was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the current Prime Minister who, as Mayor of Istanbul, honored Isa Yusuf Alptekin when he died, aged 95. This, however, was soon to end.[4]

By the mid-1990s, mainly in view of the changing regional and international situation, the Chinese had become considerably more sensitive to, and concerned about, Uyghur "separatism" at home and especially abroad. Consequently, in the mid-1990s Beijing began to apply growing pressure on Ankara to suppress the activities of organizations associated with the cause of Eastern Turkestan, often tacitly supported by the Turkish government itself. Forced by China and faced by its own Kurdish separatist challenge, Ankara has begun to restrict Uyghur national activism in Turkey. First attempts to set up an Eastern Turkestan headquarters to coordinate and supervise Uyghur nationalism worldwide, such as the Eastern Turkestan National Congress (or ETNC) were carried out and even succeeded, though not for long. Soon it has become clear that Turkey is no longer a safe and reliable base for the Eastern Turkestan nationalist movement. By that time, Germany had already become an alternative headquarters.

A number of Eastern Turkestan organizations had been established in Germany; most important among them are the Eastern Turkestan Cultural and Social Association, the Eastern Turkestan Information Center and the Union of East Turkestani Youth. These organizations have continued to enjoy German hospitality but their effectiveness was doubtful. While repeated Chinese attempts to convince Germany (and other European governments) to curtail East Turkestani nationalist activism have been firmly rejected, actual Uyghur achievements have been modest. They included a few statements made by foreign ministers; occasional speeches and remarks made by sympathetic members of parliament; some demonstrations; a number of interviews in the media and a good deal of information, messages and reports that has been circulated by using advanced communications networks, in particular the Internet.[5] Remarkable as they are, these achievements have remained abstract and no *concrete* action has been taken against Beijing's harsh treatment of Uyghurs, least of all for Eastern Turkestan independence. This was one of the main reasons why the center of East Turkestan nationalism has moved further west in a transatlantic leap to North America. This is where the buck stops.

A number of organizations that directly or indirectly embrace the Uyghur cause were established in North America in the second half of the 1990s. They include the Allied Committee of Eastern Turkestan, Inner Mongolia, Manchuria and Tibet; The Uyghur Human Rights Coalition; The International Taklamakan Human Rights Association; The Eastern Turkestan National Freedom Center; The Uyghur Information Agency; The Uyghur American Association and the Canadian Uyghur Association. Some of these organizations represent no more than letterheads and their activities have been very limited and mostly rhetorical. This was one of the main impediments of Eastern Turkestan nationalism: too many organizations, few actions and no effective center. By the early 21st century, some Uyghur leaders—primarily in North America—had become fed up with this situation and had realized it was about time for change. It is their misgivings that had led, after lengthy internal debates and preparations, to the creation of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) in April 2004—ostensibly a merger between two central Uyghur organizations that had been active in Germany: the East Turkestan National Congress (established in October 1999) and the World Uyghur Youth Congress (established in October 1996). Altogether, Uyghur delegates from thirteen different countries participated in the

[4] See: Y. Shichor, "Ethno-Diplomacy: The Uyghur Predicament in Sino-Turkish Relations" (unpublished manuscript).

[5] See: Y. Shichor, "Virtual Transnationalism: Uyghur Communities in Europe and the Quest for Eastern Turkestan Independence," in: *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and Across Europe*, ed. by J.S. Nielsen, S. Allievi, Leiden, 2003, pp. 281-311 (see also: D. Gladney, "Cyber-Separatism," Ch. 11 in his *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities and Other Subaltern Subjects*, Chicago, 2004, pp. 229-259).

meeting. Erkin Alptekin, Isa Yusuf's son and a former Secretary General of UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization) was elected as WUC first president. Although his home is in Germany, where the WUC first conference was held, much of its leadership, motivations, spirit, and values, are very much North American.

IV

Apparently, the WUC represents a different conception, and a different leadership, for the promotion of the Uyghur cause. For one thing, it caters primarily for the national aspirations of Uyghurs who—unlike the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek, and Turkmen nationalities—still do not have an independent homeland of their own. The WUC uses the term "East Turkestan"—that does not single out Uyghurs—more in a geographical than in an ethnic sense. Also, the WUC founders—many of whom had left Xinjiang since the late 1980s willingly and legally—are younger, better educated, fluent in the languages of their host countries and highly pragmatic. While still eager to achieve an independent homeland in Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) they have realized that—under present internal and international circumstances—this is a dream that could hardly be accomplished for some time to come. To begin with, there is no way that China would give up unwillingly, let alone willingly, its control over Xinjiang. Moreover, although the West is much more interested in human rights than ever before, there is no way it would support separatism in Eastern Turkestan, or elsewhere. For one reason, quite a few Western countries are themselves facing separatist threats and would by no means approve of Eastern Turkestan separatism. For another, all Western governments, with no exception, recognize China's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its official borders and even beyond (by implicitly acknowledging Beijing's claim over Taiwan). Furthermore, as the PRC's economic, political and military power continues to grow consistently, steadily and quickly, the options of challenging its territorial integrity by supporting the cause of Uyghur (or Tibetan) separatism diminish by the hour. As the international economies have become increasingly intertwined with China's, China—also a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council—could easily deter any such attempts. Thus, given these internal and external constraints, the prospects of Eastern Turkestan independence in the foreseeable future are practically nil and are not going to get any better, on the contrary. This is why the WUC founding statement does not even mention the word "independence."[6] Instead, the WUC is aiming lower, trying to do what it thinks is doable and to achieve what it thinks is achievable, namely: greater autonomy through the introduction of democracy and self-determination, at least as an interim strategy.

Such an agenda is undoubtedly much more attractive for other governments, Western as well as non-Western (many of whom are also coping with instances of separatism). For one thing, WUC strategy conforms to the Washington-led crusade for democracy and human rights yet, on the other hand, it is not too offensive to upset the Chinese to the point of undermining multilateral economic and diplomatic relationships. Unlike most other national liberation organizations that adopt violence (and often terrorism)—both in theory and in practice—to promote their cause, the WUC has relied on the use of peaceful means and moderate tactics. Furthermore, in China itself the internal debate on "autonomy" is not yet over.[7] Throughout the years Chinese scholars and intellectuals have put forward different conceptions, definitions, and meanings of the term "autonomy," to correct the political-ideological mistakes that Beijing admitted to have made from time to time. More recently some Chinese scholars

[6] Press Release, available at [http://www.uygur.org/wunn04/09_23.htm].

[7] For an excellent discussion of this issue see: G. Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent," *Policy Studies* , No. 11, Washington, 2004.

have raised ideas suggesting a redefinition of "self-determination" that, while rejecting the right for independence, provides for greater autonomy.[8]

In practice, however, there are no signs whatsoever that Beijing is ready to move in this direction. On the contrary, in 2005, celebrating fifty years of the establishment of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Beijing has appeared to be moving in the opposite direction. Since the beginning of reform over a quarter of a century ago, China's persecution of the Uyghurs has increased: there is *less* autonomy in Xinjiang now than used to be in Mao's time. To be sure, Beijing is in no hurry and has hardly any incentive to offer Uyghurs greater autonomy except, perhaps, in order to improve its international image. The Chinese feel and behave like untouchables on this score, although the recent release of the Uyghur woman activist Rebiya Kadeer from Xinjiang jail still exposes their vulnerability to external pressure. But, to quote Dru Gladney's title, "Prisoner's Release Does Not Herald a Xinjiang Spring."[9] This is precisely the problem—says another group of East Turkestani leaders: Beijing would never grant greater autonomy to East Turkestan, much less democracy. Consequently, according to this view, East Turkestan national and cultural survival cannot depend on anything less than pursuing independence uncompromisingly and at all costs.

V

To achieve this goal, in September 2004 they established a competing organization in Washington, called the Republic of East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE). As its name implies—and unlike the WUC—this organization is concerned more broadly with "East Turkestan" and "East Turkestanis," denoting a specific geographical region that contains different nationalities. The term "Uyghur" is not mentioned even once in its inauguration statement. Its high-ranking hard-line leaders ("Prime Minister," Anwar Yusuf Turani, "vice prime ministers" and "ministers") are scattered all over the world and there is practically nothing behind their titles. For this and other reasons Uyghurs and others treat the ETGE as not terribly effective and a farce. Though it is now defunct it had some value. Its founders—who believe that seeking anything less than independence is unworthy, unworkable and hopeless—tend to consider the alternative quest of greater autonomy also as treason. But if they believe that greater autonomy can hardly be achieved, how could independence—given all the constraints mentioned above?

It is probably not a coincidence that the ETGE had been established in Washington where its center was located. As elaborated in the "Declaration of the Formation of the Eastern Turkestan Government in Exile," the American connection is the cornerstone of the ETGE's strategy. Ultimately, if anything meaningful could be *done* at all for Eastern Turkestan independence (to distinguish from *said*) it would be done not by Belgium, Germany, Turkey or Kazakhstan, but by the United States—the most powerful player as yet in the unipolar world. Put differently, the ETGE smartly tied its vision of independence only to the United States "as the leader of liberty, justice, and wisdom, hoping that the United States of America will recognize the just cause of freedom and independence of millions of East Turkestanis."[10] If Washington is unable to *positively* cause Beijing to grant independence to East Turkestan and thereby "to put an end to the misery of so many innocent people"—and there are no indications that it could or would—then the prospects of Eastern Turkestan independence depend *negatively* on a deterioration of U.S.-Sino relations that could lead to China's involvement in a mili-

[8] See: *Minzu zjjue hai shi minzu fenlie: minzu he dangdai minzufenliezhuyi* (National Self-Determination or National Separatism: Nationalities and Contemporary National Separartism), ed. by Pan Zhiping, Urumqi, 1999.

[9] D. Gladney, "Prisoner's Release Does Not Herald a Xinjiang Spring," *Yale Global*, available at [http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5497]. Kadeer was later elected second WUC president.

[10] See: *Declaration of the Formation of the E.T Government in Exilen*, available at [http://www.uygur.org/wunn04/09_14.htm].

tary conflict or even to its disintegration thereby providing an opportunity for the restoration of the defunct Eastern Turkestan Republic. A few circles in the United States—and their number are steadily growing—not only share this scenario but also welcome it. Would or could it be ever accomplished? This is highly unlikely but still possible. Occasionally, China and the United States seem to be on a collision course and there have already been a number of confrontations and incidents. Yet, at least on the Chinese side, underneath this display of tension, militancy and rivalry many leaders would prefer good relations with Washington and realize the benefits for China. A Sino-American clash may still be far away, if at all, and so are the prospects of Eastern Turkestan independence.

VI

Although a unified Uyghur national movement has never really existed, the pluralistic nature of Eastern Turkestan nationalism, promoted by a number of organizations and associations in a variety of ways, facilitated a certain flexibility, fundamental common understanding and shared values. Now, the division of the Uyghur national movement into two apparently separate ideologies, strategies and institutions has forced Diaspora Uyghurs to identify with one or the other—or with none. A rivalry between these two camps has consequently begun to emerge creating internal tension and discord among expatriate Uyghurs. To be sure, whether inside or outside China, Uyghurs have never constituted a homogenous group. Yet, the current split appears to cut across families, friends and communities, thereby undermining the sense of solidarity that had been felt heretofore despite existing divergence. Perhaps this is because expatriate Uyghurs had traditionally regarded their national struggle as a virtual one in which they should not have had to be personally involved while now they have come around to regard it as a real one in which they should. But which way to go? The essentially pragmatic way? The essentially dogmatic way? None? Or perhaps both?

Conclusion

One could question the effectiveness of a bifurcated national movement that pursues two apparently different and mutually exclusive goals simultaneously. Indeed, if we look from above, a two-headed creature is an abnormality and a recipe for discords, splits, and eventual weakness and collapse. Yet, if we look from below, a two-legged creature is absolutely normal even if its legs are not coordinated and go in different directions. In this respect, and in my view, the two organizations complemented rather than contradicted each other—like *yin* and *yang* (to use another Chinese expression). While pragmatism and compromises are essential for achieving political goals, one should never lose sight of the ultimate vision, a compass that points all activities to the ultimate direction. Even if achieved, which is unlikely, democracy and greater autonomy for Uyghurs is but a first step in the long march toward independence. If Jewish experience is considered, it may take years, decades, or even centuries, but the vision should be kept alive at all costs.

Such combination of pragmatism and idealism is not necessarily Chinese. In fact, it is often typical of national liberation movements and provides for more flexibility along the way in order to reach the final destination. Either diplomacy or militancy may fail. Both diplomacy *and* militancy may win. Modern history is full of examples. It is the interaction between political and pragmatic Zionism (that was ready to accept—then and now—the partition of Palestine), on the one hand, and dogmatic-militant Zionism (that would not compromise), on the other, that had finally led to the withdrawal of British colonialism from Palestine and thereafter to the establishment of the State of Israel. Similarly, Palestinian violence alone could not promote a Palestinian State, on the contrary. Yet, at the same time it provided incentives for a political dialogue and readiness to compromise that paved the ground for the

establishment of a Palestinian State, not virtual but actual. Many other national liberation movements have displayed a similar dualistic nature and experience that contributed to their success. “Walking on two legs” is by no means exceptional. In fact, it could enable Uyghur nationalism and the vision of the Eastern Turkestan Republic to proceed in more than one way and to ensure progress. Right now, however, with its diminishing militant nationalism, the Uyghur independence movement appears to be limping on two legs rather than walking, least of all running.